

Antegrade Colonic Enema

One of a series of fact sheets produced by the Family Support Service

ACE (Antegrade Colonic Enema)

This is like giving yourself an enema and bowel washout through a stoma on your tummy. An ACE stoma is a small opening onto your abdomen using your appendix and it looks like an extra tummy button. This stoma is known as a continent stoma which means it does not leak, therefore there is no need to wear a stoma bag. Some people wear a small protective dressing over it.

Who has this done?

Those requiring an ACE are often those who have problems with continence conditions such as Spina Bifida. Before the ACE stoma is created, children and their families require counselling to enable them to fully understand what will be required of them and the commitment involved.

What is an ACE procedure?

The Ace procedure is putting a catheter, which is a thin rubber tube, into your stoma. This is done while sitting on the toilet. You attach a syringe to the catheter and pour a phosphate and sterile water solution into it, letting the solution gradually flow into you bowel. This is called irrigating your bowel.

As it washes out your bowel you then pass faeces and water into the toilet. This can take about half an hour to an hour. It is time consuming and it is important that you understand the full implications of this procedure before surgery. Once you have established a routine the benefits of doing the ACE procedure often out-weigh the fact that it is time consuming because of the feeling of wellbeing. There is no soiling and rectal enemas and laxative medication are no longer required.

What happens if I get appendicitis?

This cannot happen. During the operation the appendix is opened at both ends, preventing the build-up of debris at the tip of the appendix which often causes appendicitis.

Will the ACE stop me from doing things like, for example, playing sports, swimming and going out?

No, once you have recovered from the operation you will gradually be able to return to the activities you enjoy. The ACE will not stop you from doing anything at all.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Family Support Workers at:

Scottish Spina Bifida Association - Family Support Service

Address: The Dan Young Building, 6 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, G68 0LS • Tel: 01236 794516 • Fax: 01236 736435

Lo-Call Helpline: 08459 11 11 12 • E-mail: familysupport@ssba.org.uk • Web: www.ssba.org.uk

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