

**If you have any further questions
please do not hesitate to ask.**

Contact details

Colorectal clinical nurse specialists:

0121 371 4980 (with answerphone)

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Useful contacts

Bladder and Bowel Community

Helpline: 0845 345 0165

www.bladderandbowel.org

Guts UK

Telephone: 0207 486 0341

www.gutscharity.org.uk

MASIC Foundation

masic.org.uk



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

Functional Bowel Disease Service

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University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



**How to use
glycerine
suppositories**

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package until you are ready to use it

4. Position yourself comfortably. Lying on your left side with feet level or slightly elevated is the best position when inserting a suppository
5. When ready, take the suppository out of the package and hold it in between your thumb and middle finger. Be careful not to drop it
6. Use water soluble lubricant to coat the blunt end of the suppository
7. Be sure that the blunt shape is pointing toward the anus not the tip. Insert suppository directly into the anus. Insert it enough to avoid suppository from coming out. (Usually to the depth of your finger is sufficient)
8. Lie still and hold suppository inside the back passage for 10-15 minutes
9. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water after your bowel movement

How many do I use?

It is usual to start on one suppository a day at a time convenient to yourself and increase this to 2 per day if one is not sufficient. Ideally the bowel should be emptied in the morning as that is when the urge is strongest. However, if you have insufficient time it may be necessary to use them in the evening after a meal. They are a safe medication and are not addictive so can be used long term.

What are glycerine suppositories?

Glycerine suppositories are rectal laxatives for relieving mild to moderate constipation. They are for rectal use only – this means that they are inserted into the back passage.

Glycerine suppositories are used to empty the back passage of stool which encourages the bowel to empty. As they are very efficient in emptying the back passage they are also used in the treatment of faecal leakage. This is effective because when the back passage is empty there is nothing there to leak out and so cause an accident.

How do they work?

The melting of glycerine suppositories inside the back passage lubricates and softens faecal matter. Lubricating and softening stools helps to prevent straining during a difficult bowel movement.

Glycerine is a mild irritant which increases the frequency of bowel movement by stimulating the bowel muscles to contract. These contractions help to move stools along and makes passing them out of the body much easier.

Glycerine suppositories attract water from the bowel down towards the mass of hardened stool to relieve constipation quickly and effectively. Glycerine suppositories also cause the muscles in the rectum to move more effectively in order

to facilitate a bowel movement.

When used for people with leakage problems this emptying of the lower bowel prevents leakage of stool for the rest of the day and so helps with confidence. They can be used with loperamide in this situation as the loperamide slows the bowel movement down, and the suppositories help in emptying the back passage completely.

What are the risks?

Glycerine suppositories are very safe to use and do not react with other medication. It is safe to use them long-term to help control symptoms. There are uncommon side effects related to taking glycerine suppositories, but they are normally mild. Side effects associated with glycerine suppositories typically include irritation, abdominal pain, swelling and loose stools.

Following the insertion of the suppository, some patients report burning or irritation. The irritation is normally felt in the area of the back passage and some women report vaginal burning. The irritation does not last long because it occurs immediately before the bowels are opened.

Abdominal pain is another side effect that accompanies the insertion of glycerine suppositories. Cramps will often subside shortly after the bowels are empty. There may be some minor temporary swelling felt around the anal

area after insertion of the suppositories, but this will disappear after the bowel movement.

What are the benefits?

The benefits of using glycerine suppositories are easier passage of stool from the back passage. As they help to completely empty the back passage of stool, they are also useful in treating leakage and incontinence. Some people find it useful to firm the stool consistency by using loperamide (a medication used to treat diarrhoea) on a regular basis. Glycerine suppositories can then be used daily to empty the firmer stool from the back passage. As the back passage is then empty this can prevent leakage and incontinence.

What are the alternatives?

There are other suppositories available but they contain much stronger medication and therefore have more side effects. There are also enemas available but these are more messy to use and can cause more side effects.

How to use glycerine suppositories

1. Wash hands thoroughly in warm water and soap
2. You may opt to use gloves
3. Open the package of the suppository, but keep the suppository inside the