

What are glycerol suppositories?

Glycerol suppositories are mild laxatives that are used to relieve constipation. They are for rectal use only. (But can be used in the same way with a stoma)

They are used to remove stool from the back passage.

As they are so effective at emptying the back passage, they are sometimes used for the treatment of faecal incontinence too. This is because as the bowel is empty there is nothing to leak out.

How do they work?

The glycerol acts as a lubricant therefore softening the stool. It is also a mild stimulant and causes the bowel muscles to contract therefore making it easier to expel the stool.

When used for the treatment of faecal incontinence, this complete emptying of the bowel can stop leakage during the rest of the day which improves confidence. When someone has very loose stools with faecal incontinence they can be used with Loperamide, which slows the bowel movement down higher up in the gut and glycerol helps to

empty the bowel completely in the lower bowel.

Are there any risks involved with taking glycerol suppositories?

They are very safe and do not react with other medication.

Patients with an allergy to glycerol should not use the suppositories.

Adults suppositories are not suitable for use by children and infants.

Use only under a doctor's instruction when pregnant.

How to use Glycerol suppositories

- Tear open the packet, but keep the suppository inside the packet.
- If the suppository is soft it can be refrigerated before use to make handling easier.
- Use tap water on the end of the suppository.
- Lie on your left side with your knees bent up.
- Take the suppository out of the packet and insert it. You can use gloves if you prefer.

Try to insert to the depth of your finger. Some people find that inserting the suppository blunt end first is easier.

If it comes out straight away it may not be inserted far enough into the rectum.

- Stay still on your side for 15 – 30 minutes.
- When you have the urge to empty get up and go to the toilet. It is not necessary for the whole suppository to melt to get results. If however, you have an urge to empty as soon as you have inserted the suppository; try to 'hang on' a little longer as you will have better results.

Do glycerol suppositories cause side effects?

Sometimes people experience some cramps or slight swelling around the anus. The swelling should settle quickly.

After insertion some people report a burning or irritation. Some women experience a burning sensation within the vagina. This sensation goes after the bowel is emptied.


How many do I use?

Adults should use one 4g suppository.

Initially it is best to try to use one suppository at a time convenient to you. First thing in the morning is often most successful as this is a time when the urge to empty your bowel may be strongest. Alternatively use one in the evening.

Sometimes people require two suppositories.

Useful contact

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the Physiotherapy Department on  **Tel. (01803) 655340** or the Bowel Biofeedback Clinic **(01803 655294)**

References

'How to use Glycerin suppositories', Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham (2013)

Contact details



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The Use of Glycerol Suppositories

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