

Anal dilatation

Information for Parents and Carers

What is anal dilatation?

Following surgery to correct abnormalities of the bowel e.g. imperforate anus or anal stenosis it is necessary for your baby to have the anus dilated (stretched). This is to prevent narrowing of the anus which can happen after surgery.

How often is this required?

The first dilatation will be done approximately 2 weeks after surgery. This may be done in theatre under anaesthetic or in the ward. You will be advised of this by your surgeon.

Your stoma nurse will then teach you how to carry this out at home. It requires to be done twice a day for the first few months, reducing the frequency until 6 months are completed.

The size of dilator will be gradually increased by the stoma nurse, usually on a weekly basis.

Is it uncomfortable?

It can initially be a distressing procedure, but when carried out regularly it becomes less stressful and part of your routine. Your baby is likely to scream during the procedure mainly due to being undressed and held firmly. It is uncomfortable but the pain should only last a few seconds. It is therefore best to time the dilatation just before a feed or bath, which will then settle the child afterwards. It may also be necessary to give pain relief such as paracetamol for the first few times.

What is the procedure?

- Gather the equipment
- Wash your hands
- Remove the baby's nappy
- Ensure the baby is on a safe, flat surface
- Remove the nappy and clean the baby's bottom
- Lubricate the dilator well with lubricating jelly
- Hold baby's feet firmly against the abdomen with one hand and gently insert the dilator into the anus with the other hand
- (it is easier to do this with two people)
- Gently rotate and advance the dilator (for a few cms as you have been shown)
- You will feel a "give" as the dilator goes through the muscle
- When the dilator is inside the anus leave for a few seconds and then remove.
- Wipe the skin and replace the nappy as normal.

Occasionally some bleeding occurs at the time or when the baby next opens his/her bowels. This is due to the fact that blood vessels are very close to the surface of the bowel and putting the dilator in can cause some bleeding.

Care of the anal dilator

Wash the dilator in warm soapy water. Dry carefully and store in a safe place, out of reach of children.

Ongoing care

It will be necessary to increase the size of dilator gradually but you will be advised and supported with this.

If you have any problems inserting the dilator or are worried about anything, please phone the Stoma Nurse Specialist on **0131 312 0584**.

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