

## Gastroenterology

# St Mark's solution

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

We want to give you information about St Mark's Solution. We hope this leaflet answers some of the questions you or those who care for you may have. If you have more questions, please do not hesitate to ask your doctor.

### What is St Mark's solution?

St Mark's solution is a glucose electrolyte mix you can make at home from low-cost ingredients. It's commonly called an oral rehydration solution (ORS). We use St Mark's solution for the management of short bowel syndrome. Surgical resection or congenital disease of the small intestine causes this syndrome. St Mark's Solution is also potassium free.

Your doctor or dietitian may recommend you use St Mark's solution if you have a high stoma output. Due to this complex condition, you may not be able to absorb enough water while on a normal diet. Also, your body will not fully absorb vitamins, minerals, protein, fat, calories, and other nutrients from food.

If you are not absorbing enough water, you may experience a high output from your stoma. A high output puts you at a greater risk of becoming dehydrated. We consider losing more than 1,500ml per day from your stoma as a high output.

So, to prevent dehydration we may advise you to drink one to three litres of St Mark's solution. You'll need to sip this throughout the day.

### How to make St Mark's solution

#### Follow this recipe to make a 1 litre batch

Ingredient	Weight	Other measures (1 teaspoon = 5ml)
glucose powder	20g	6 teaspoons
table salt (sodium chloride)	3.5g	1 level teaspoon
baking soda (sodium bicarbonate) or sodium citrate	2.5g	heaped ½ teaspoon of powder or the contents of 5 x 500 mg opened sodium bicarbonate capsules
cold water	1 litre	1 ¾ pints or 3.5 imperial cups or 4 US cups

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## Method

1. Buy all the powder ingredients from a supermarket or pharmacy. This is cheaper than getting them on prescription.
2. Measure out all the ingredients into a large jug or bowl.
3. Dissolve them in 1 litre of cold tap water.
4. Sip throughout the day.
5. Throw away any left after 24-hours.
6. Prepare a fresh solution the following day.

You may have been told to drink more than 1 litre of St Mark's solution each day. If so, you'll need to increase the amount of water and the amount of other ingredients.

For example, if we've told you to drink 2Ls of the solution each day:

1. Measure out twice the amount of ingredients shown in the table.
2. Dissolve in 2L of cold tap water.

**You should drink \_\_\_\_\_L St Mark's solution per day**

## Improving the taste

The solution may taste salty. You can improve this by:

- storing the drink in the refrigerator and sipping it chilled
- freezing the solution and sipping it as a slush
- sipping it through a straw
- adding a splash of squash, fruit juice or cordial. It's best to add these while making up the solution rather than adding them to each glass. This will keep the salt content at the right level

## Managing stoma output

Drinking too much ordinary fluid will increase your stoma output. It may make you become thirstier and more dehydrated. Fruit juice, squash, fizzy drinks, water, tea, and coffee are examples of ordinary fluid.

We sweat and lose salt and fluid from the body when it is hot. When it's warm, people with a high stoma output are more likely to get dehydrated. You may find you need to drink more St Mark's solution to replace these losses. Your doctor or dietitian will be able to tell you about increasing your daily amount of St Mark's solution.

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## You can reduce your output by:

- limiting the ordinary fluids that you drink to about 1 litre or 6 cups per day
- drinking a rehydration solution like St Mark's solution to help your body absorb fluid and salt
- increasing your salt intake
- reducing your fibre intake

If you need more information, please talk to your doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

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