

What is antegrade colonic enema (ACE) surgery?

Antegrade colonic enema surgery (ACE) or Malone antegrade colonic enema (MACE) is a procedure designed to help empty the bowel of feces using fluid (similar to an enema) inserted into a small opening in the side of the abdomen rather than into the rectum.

When is it performed?

Indications include refractory constipation and fecal incontinence. These may arise as a result of congenital abnormalities affecting the rectum and anus, or through neuropathies (nerve supply problems) that result from spinal abnormalities.

How often should the bowels be emptied?

Most people use their ACE once daily, but a few need to use it only every other day. An irrigation may take 30-60 minutes. It is important to stick to a routine and empty your bowels at approximately the same time every day. Approximately 30 minutes after a meal is a good time as the colon has increased activity and good clearance of the bowels is more likely.

How is the surgery performed?

In the surgery, a connection is created between the abdominal wall and the colon (large intestine) using the appendix (if the appendix has not been removed) or from a piece of small intestine. This conduit is brought to the surface of the skin via a small opening called a stoma. In many cases, ACE surgery can be done laparoscopically.

What happens after the surgery?

Following the surgery, a catheter (thin plastic tube) will be left in the stoma to keep it open. The catheter remains in place for one month after the surgery. During this time, the catheter should be flushed daily with tap water or a fluid determined by your doctor. Your doctor or nurse will instruct you regarding how to flush out your bowels at home.

Are there any long-term problems with ACE surgery?

There are some people who find that ACE does not work for them. They may find that there is soiling between irrigations or that the irrigations simply do not work. One other potential problem is that the opening at the skin can tend to close up with time, particularly if it is not used regularly.