

6 tips and tricks for
**TRANSANAL
IRRIGATION
(TAI) USERS**

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PATIENCE

First of all it takes time with the bowel. It is probably the part of the body that takes the longest time to adjust to a new situation. Allow your bowel to adjust. Create routines for food and bowel so it can fall into a good pace.

I still need to make sure I drink enough water. When I'm in warmer climates I really need to pay attention to my drinking, and drink much more water to avoid getting constipated. Having a fairly healthy diet is also to recommend. It helps your bowel and makes you feel better as well.

EVALUATE AND RE-LEARN

Over the years I have adjusted how I perform my regime. One example is that I now use TAI every third day instead of every second, which I did during the first few years. I think our bodies change over time and the better we can get to know them and listen to them, the better we can adjust. That's true for everything in our lives, so listen to your body - how does it seem to react?

Already in the hospital, long before I even started with TAI, I was told that I should empty the bowels in the mornings. That has not worked for me at all and I had to find my own ideal time. For me, that's a time when I don't feel stressed and really can take the time I need without the urge to be somewhere else directly after. So ask yourself when your best time is.

AMOUNT OF WATER

I use about 500-600 ml. That's a good amount for me and my regime. When using this amount of water I can feel it reaching up to where the intestines turn 90 degrees, just below the ribs on my left side. I know people using both more and less. Bowel treatment is not science - it's art - so do your own thing, your own way.

Speaking of water, I know several people who put the water container on the floor. It's nothing wrong with that, but you will need an increased pressure to pump the water into your bowel.

I put a towel on the seat of my wheelchair and put the container there. That way I need less pressure to pump the water. If you don't use a wheelchair, maybe you could use another chair or the sink instead.

HOLDING THE CATHETER

One of the most common misunderstandings, even among professionals, is that the regime isn't for you if you need to hold onto the catheter to prevent it from coming out. That's just incorrect.

Having a spinal cord injury (SCI), I have no control over my sphincter muscle. And it's the same for most of my peers. That would exclude us from TAI. I see it as an advantage to hold onto the catheter.

When I fill the water, the water needs to pass through the stool and irrigate the bowel. Sometimes it takes time for the bowel to expand so the water can pass. When that happens I feel an increased pressure on the balloon. Then I know I need to stop filling and wait, maybe even massage my stomach to help the procedure. When I feel that the pressure decreases I can resume the process of adding water.

TIME CONSUMPTION

Many times I have been asked questions about how long time everything takes. My normal routine is as follows:

- First of all I empty my bladder as it otherwise will affect the transanal irrigation.
- After that I insert the catheter and fill the bowel with water, which takes 3-5 min.
- I take out the catheter and wait about 15-20 min.
- Then the emptying takes 5-15 minutes.
- In my own routine I always take a shower afterwards. It makes me feel clean and it minimizes the bacteria in that area, something I'm sure has a positive effect on reducing the risk of UTI. I wish we all could pay more attention to the bowel treatment and it's effect on UTIs.

USING GLOVES AND YOUR HAND

I have seen instruction videos that shows how easy it is for the stool to pass after irrigation. To return to the beginning of this post; if it sounds to good to be true ...

It does not work that easy for me at least. I need to use a finger up my butt to help the sphincter relax so the stool can pass. It also seems to trigger the reflexes so it helps a lot. If the bowel does not start by itself, try to massage the stomach downwards. Lean forward if possible. Normally these things combined will do the trick.



I hope some of these ideas will help you with your bowel management!

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