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## Crack the Code: Understanding Your Doctor's Instructions

Do you know exactly what constitutes "clear liquids?" What exactly is a sitz bath? Your doctor probably assumes that you know what these and many other common medical instructions mean, but chances are you are not one hundred percent sure. Several of these often-prescribed treatments are described below.

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### Baking Soda Bath

Your doctor may recommend a baking soda bath to help relieve the discomfort of certain skin problems. To take a baking soda bath, fill a tub of warm water with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of baking soda.

### Bland Diet

Your doctor may recommend a bland diet to help alleviate stomach problems such as ulcers, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or gas. A bland diet includes foods that are soft, lightly seasoned, and low in fiber. For example:

- √ Clear liquids (water, clear fruit juices, broth, tea)
- √ Low-fiber cereals, pastas, potatoes, and rice
- √ Cooked and mashed vegetables without stems and seeds
- √ Bananas
- √ Mild juices, such as apple, grape, and pear
- √ No dairy products

### Honey-lemon Cough Mixture

Your doctor may prescribe a honey-lemon cough mixture to help soothe a sore throat and act as an expectorant. To prepare the mixture, mix two parts honey to one part lemon juice.

**Hot Pack**

Hot packs may be prescribed for a number of conditions, from relieving the chills to soothing the pain of a headache. To prepare a hot pack, wrap a filled hot water bottle in a towel soaked in warm water (and wrung out). Cover the hot pack in plastic and apply to the affected area for twenty minutes. Then remove for twenty minutes, and repeat.

**Sitz Bath**

Your doctor may recommend a sitz bath to help ease the pain of hemorrhoids or abdominal cramps, or to ease the discomfort of a bladder or yeast infection. A sitz bath involves soaking the hips and buttocks in warm water or a warm salt water solution.

**Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate (RICE)**

The RICE regimen may be recommended for minor injuries like sprains and pulled muscles.

- √ Rest the injured area.
- √ Ice the injury to reduce swelling. Use an ice pack or wrap a towel around ice or a package of frozen vegetables. Apply the ice for twenty minutes, remove it for twenty minutes, and repeat.
- √ Compress swelling with an elastic bandage.
- √ Elevate the injury above the level of your heart to reduce blood pressure and limit swelling.

**Saline Nose Drops**

Saline nose drops are often recommended to relieve nasal congestion. To prepare the drops, mix a cup of warm water with  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of salt. Apply 2 – 3 drops to each nostril with an eyedropper or bulb syringe.

**Urge Fluids**

Physicians often recommend maintaining urge fluids to avoid dehydration. This means drinking one eight-ounce glass of water every hour until bedtime.

**Liquid Diet**

When experiencing nausea or vomiting, your doctors recommend that you suck on ice chips or popsicles to prevent dehydration if you are having trouble keeping food down. Sipping on a lukewarm, flat soft drink — such as white soda — will also help control your nausea and provide you much-needed sugar and potassium.

