## Laxatives for Children

These guidelines apply when the child: has difficulty and/or pain going to the toilet and goes to the toilet less often than usual. Delays of greater than 3 days between stools may increase the likelihood of pain on passing hard stools, anal fissure, anal spasm and learned behaviour to avoid defaecation.

### Causes
- Insufficient dietary fibre
- Insufficient fluids
- Not going to the toilet when they need to – gastrocolic reflex
- Faecal impaction
- Emotional problems
- Allergy to cows milk
- Other bowel disorders

### Acute and/or mild constipation
- Provide dietary advice
- Increase fluids
- Increase exercise
- Utilise the gastrocolic reflex and encourage the child to visit the toilet after meals.
- If laxatives are prescribed, they should be stopped as soon as stools are easily passed again
- Provide Wirral Patient Information Leaflet

### Chronic constipation
- Most common in children aged 2-4 years
- Assess for faecal impaction
- Treat with macrogols at doses in Children’s BNF until impaction resolves or for max 7 days)
- Prescribe daily laxatives until the child goes to the toilet normally
- Stopping laxatives too soon can lead to recurrence of chronic constipation

### Medical Prescribers only. If a laxative is required: (for full details of doses see BNF for Children)

#### Mild/Acute Constipation

**Lactulose:**
- Infants 1 month to 1 year: 2.5mL twice daily.
- Aged 1-5 years: 5mL twice daily
- Aged 5-18 years: 5 to 20mL twice daily

**Faecal Impaction**

Movicol Paediatric Plain® (licensed):
- Infants under 1 year: ½ to 1 sachet daily, 1 to 6 years: 1 sachet daily, 6-12 years 2 sachets daily. Unlicensed under 2 years
- Lactulose: Infants 1 month to 1 year: - 2.5mL twice daily, aged 1 to 5 years - 5 mL twice daily, 5 to 18 years - 5 to 20 mL twice daily
- Senna liquid: 1 month to 4 years - 2.5 to 10 mL daily, 4 to 18 years - 2.5 to 20 mL daily. Unlicensed under 2 years
- Bisacodyl: 5 to 20mg. once daily. Only licensed for children aged over 4 years

**Stimulant laxatives:** may overcome withholding but can lead to colic or overflow in the case of impaction. Senna syrup is licensed for children over 2 years, bisacodyl for children over 4 years;

**Bulk forming laxatives e.g. ispaghula husk:** licensed for children over 6 years if the diet is low in fibre

**Rectal preparations:** may be distressing for the child and are not recommended.

#### Chronic Constipation (all treatment doses to be adjusted according to response)

Movicol Paediatric Plain®: aged under 1 year: ½ to 1 sachet daily, 1 to 6 years: 1 sachet daily, 6-12 years 2 sachets daily. Unlicensed under 2 years
- Lactulose: Infants 1 month to 1 year: 2.5mL twice daily, aged 1 to 5 years - 5 mL twice daily, 5 to 18 years - 5 to 20 mL twice daily
- Senna liquid: 1 month to 4 years - 2.5 to 10 mL daily, 4 to 18 years - 2.5 to 20 mL daily. Unlicensed under 2 years
- Bisacodyl: 5 to 20mg. once daily. Only licensed for children aged over 4 years
- Docusate (Diocyl Paediatric Solution®): 6 months to 2 years - 12.5mg three times a day, 2 to 12 years 12.5mg to 25mg three times a day. Unlicensed under 12 years

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