

Laxatives for Adults

Clinical Guideline

These guidelines apply for the treatment of constipation if: stools are being passed less frequently than normal, are of a hard consistency or there is straining or incomplete evacuation

<p>Assess patient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other change in bowel habit requires further investigation If faecal incontinence is a problem, go to appropriate guidelines If bowels are obstructed, do not use stimulant or bulk forming laxatives Avoid stimulant laxatives in faecal impaction 	<p>Physical causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dehydration, poor diet/ fluid intake Immobility or frailty Pregnancy Stroke Hypothyroidism Parkinsonism Multiple sclerosis Hypercalcaemia 	<p>Drug induced causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opioid analgesics Tricyclic antidepressants Iron preparations Anticholinergics eg hyoscine, procyclidine Diuretics Antacids Calcium antagonists Levodopa 	<p>Initial Management: Provide lifestyle advice – may take up to a month for full effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diet: 18 to 30g fibre/day increased gradually Fluid: At least 1.5 to 2L/day (unless contraindicated e.g. heart or renal failure) Increase physical activity Explain the gastrocolic reflex: Recommend the patient visits the toilet 20 minutes after a meal
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In general avoid prescribing laxatives long term unless for opioid-induced constipation. If a laxative is required:

<p>Acute constipation Stimulant laxative. eg bisacodyl tablets 5-20mg at night or senna tablets 2-4 at night.</p> <p>Rapid relief - stat doses of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glycerol 4g suppositories Bisacodyl 10mg supps Sodium citrate enema Phosphate enema <p>Faecal impaction if steps above have failed: Macrogols sachets – up to 8 sachets daily in divided doses for up to 3 days</p>	<p>Chronic constipation</p> <p>See 'Management of chronic idiopathic constipation in adults clinical guideline' for further information.</p>	<p>Opioid induced constipation Change to a less constipating drug if possible. As soon as opioids are prescribed, start:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A stimulant laxative Docusate up to 500mg daily in divided doses or Macrogols sachets 1 to 3 daily Microlax enema <p>Laxatives may be added in the order listed above. Avoid bulking agents. If failed on above then naloxegol 25mg, orally, in the morning can be initiated by a Consultant ONLY as per NICE technology appraisal 345</p>	<p>Pregnancy & Lactation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase dietary fibre, fluid intake and exercise Ispaghula husk eg Fybogel. 1 sachet twice daily Lactulose 10 to 15mL twice daily Glycerol suppositories are suitable for occasional use
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Be aware of the potential for misuse of stimulant laxatives, especially in young people