



What are laxatives?



Managing Constipation Learning Disabilities Matters

What are laxatives?



Laxatives are a type of medicine that can treat constipation.



They may be prescribed by your doctor if you cannot poo.



Your doctor will ask you to eat more fibre such as fruit and vegetables and drink plenty of fluid (water) and try to move around more (exercise).



You can buy laxatives from pharmacies and supermarkets.



They are also available on prescription from a doctor.

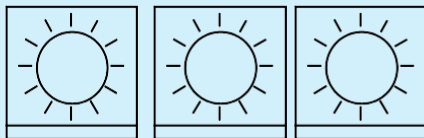
Types of laxatives

There are 4 main types of laxatives.

Bulk-forming laxatives



Bulk-forming laxatives work by increasing the “bulk” or weight of poo which helps your bowel pass the poo.



They take 2 or 3 days to work.

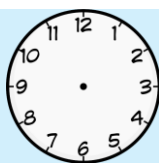


An example of a bulk-forming laxative is Fybogel.

Stimulant laxatives



These move the muscles in the bowel, moving the poo along helping you to poo.



They take 6 to 12 hours to work.

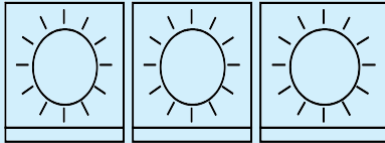


An example of a stimulant laxative is Senna.

Osmotic laxatives



Osmotic laxatives take water from the body into your bowel to soften poo and make it easier to pass.



They take 2 or 3 days to work.

2-3 days



An example of an Osmotic laxative is Lactulose or Movicol.

Poo-softener laxatives



This type of laxative works by letting water into poo to soften it and make it easier to pass.



An example of a poo softener laxative is Docusate Sodium.

Enemas and suppositories



The doctor may want to treat your constipation quickly. He may prescribe an enema or suppositories. These are given in your bottom. You may need a nurse or carer to do this for you. These will help you do a poo very quickly.

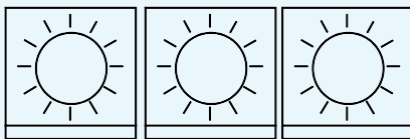
Which laxative should I use?



It is difficult to know whether one laxative will work better than another. It depends on the person.



Speak to a doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure which laxative to use.



3 days

See your doctor if you have not had a poo for three days.

The side effects of laxatives



Laxatives may cause side effects. They are usually mild and should stop once you stop taking the laxative.

Common side effects of most laxatives include:



Bloating
Farting
Tummy cramps
Feeling sick
Dehydration –not drinking enough which can make you feel dizzy, have a headache and have pee that's a darker colour than normal.



Using laxatives too often or for too long may cause diarrhoea. The bowel becomes blocked by a large dry poo and runny poo can push past this and looks like diarrhoea.