

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

LAXATIVES

ABOUT your medicine

Laxatives are medicines taken to promote bowel movements and relieve constipation.

There are several different types of laxative and they work in different ways. Since directions for use are different for each type, it is important to know which one you are taking. The different types of laxatives are:

Type of Laxatives	Examples	Mode of action
Bulk former - comes in oral powder form	Ispaghula husk (Fybogel®) Psyllium hydrophilic mucilloid (Metamucil®) Sterculia (Normacol®)	It works by absorbing the liquid in the intestine and swells to form a soft, bulky stool. The bowel is then stimulated by the presence of the bulky mass.
Stimulant -comes in oral tablet form (for bisacodyl, it has also suppository form)	Bisacodyl (Dulcolax®) Senna (Senokot®)	It encourages bowel movement by acting on the intestinal wall. It increases muscle contraction and this moves the stool mass towards the rectum.

Stool softener - comes in oral liquid form or enema	Liquid Paraffin Liquid Paraffin Emulsion Olive Oil Enema	It works by coating and softening the faeces. The stool remains soft and the passage is made easier.
Osmotic	Glycerol (suppository) <u>Lactulose type</u> Lactulose (Duphalac®) (oral liquid) <u>Saline type</u> Polyethylene Glycol (Klean-Prep®)(oral) Magnesium Sulphate Sodium phosphate (Fleet® Phospho-Soda) (oral or enema)	It encourages bowel movement by drawing water into the bowel from surrounding body tissues. This provides a soft stool mass and increased bowel action

HOW should I take/use the medicine?

For safe and effective use of your laxative:

- Follow your doctor's instruction if this laxative was prescribed.
- Follow the manufacturer's package direction if you are treating yourself.

With all kinds of laxatives, at least 6 to 8 glasses of liquids should be taken each day. This will help to make the stool softer.

For patients taking laxatives containing *bulk forming* ingredient:

- Mix the dry powder in a glass of liquid and drink immediately.
- To allow the bulk-forming laxatives to work properly and to prevent intestinal blockage, it is necessary to drink plenty of fluids during their use. Each dose should be taken in with a full glass or more of cold water or fruit juice. This will provide enough liquid for the laxative to work properly.
- When taking the bulk former, results often may be obtained as early as 12 hours or as late as 2 or 3 days.

For patients taking laxatives containing *stimulant*:

- Stimulant laxatives are usually taken on an empty stomach for rapid effect. Results are slowed if taken with food.
- Many stimulant laxatives are often taken at bedtime to produce results the next morning (although some may require 24 hours or more)

Bisacodyl tablets are specially coated to allow them to work properly without causing gastric irritation and/or nausea. Do not chew, crush or take the tablet within an hour of milk or antacids.

For patients taking laxatives containing *stool softener*:

- The medicine should not be taken within 2 hours of meals because of possible interference with food digestion and absorption

- It is usually taken at bedtime (but not while lying down) for convenience and because it requires about 6 to 8 hours to produce results.

For patients taking laxatives containing an *osmotic* ingredient:

- The unpleasant taste produced by some laxatives may be improved by following each dose with citrus fruit juice or citrus-flavored carbonated beverages.
- Lactulose may not produce laxative results for 24 to 48 hours.
- Saline laxatives usually produce results within ½ to 3 hours following a dose.

For patients using the suppository form of osmotic laxative:

- If the suppository is too soft to insert, chill the suppository in the refrigerator for 30 minutes or run cold water over it, before removing the foil wrapper
- Results may be obtained within 15minutes to 1 hour

For patients using the enema or rectal form of this medicine:

- This medicine usually comes with patient directions. Read them carefully before using this medicine.

What are the possible **SIDE-EFFECTS** of the medicine?

Along with its needed effects, a medicine may cause some unwanted effects. These side effects may go away during treatment as your body adjusts to the medicine. However, check with your doctor if any of the following side effects continue or are bothersome:

Type of medicine	Side effects
Bulk former	Flatulence, abdominal distension
Stimulant laxative	Abdominal cramp, diarrhea, nausea, belching
Stool softener	Anal seepage of paraffin, anal irritation after prolonged use
Osmotic laxative	Cramping, diarrhea, gas, increased thirst

Consult your doctor if you experience any unusual side effects when taking your medication especially:

For bulk forming laxative:

Difficulty in breathing; skin rash or itching; swallowing difficulties

For osmotic and stimulant laxative:

Confusion; irregular heart beat; muscle cramps; unusual tiredness or weakness; bloody stools; rectal bleeding

What **PRECAUTIONS** should I take?

Before taking the medicine,

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to any drugs

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist what medications you are taking, especially antibiotics, antacids, pain or seizure medicine, heart disease or blood pressure medicine, and vitamins.
- Tell your doctor if you have or have ever had diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure or intestinal disease.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding.

Laxative products are overused by many people. Such a practice often leads to dependence on the laxative action to produce a bowel movement. In severe cases, overuse of some laxatives may cause damage to the nerves, muscles, and tissues of intestines and bowel. If you have any questions about the use of laxatives, check with your health care professional.

How should I **STORE** the medicine?

Keep the medication in an airtight container. Store away from heat and direct sunlight.