

Classes of laxatives

Class of Agent	Examples	Time to effect
Bulking Agents	Unprocessed bran	2–3 days
	Soluble fibres (mucilaginous laxatives) - Psyllium (Konsyl D, Mucilax, metamucil) - Ispaghula (Isogel)	2–3 days 2–3 days
Stimulant Laxatives	Docusate sodium with sennosides Coloxyl with Senna	8–12 hours
	*Codalax (Danthron with Poloxamer)	6–12 hours
	Bisacodyl - Oral (Dulcolax; Bisacodyl AFT) - Rectal (Dulcolax, Fleet)	10–12 hours 20–60 min
Faecal softeners	Docusate sodium (also has stimulant activity) - Oral (Coloxyl Tablets) - Enema (Coloxyl enema concentrate)	12–72 hours 15–20 mins
	Poloxamer (Coloxyl drops)	12–24 hours
Osmotic Laxatives	Lactulose (Laevolac)	Up to 2 days
	Macrogols (polyethylene glycols) (Movicol)	1–3 days
	Glycerol Suppositories (also has a stimulant effect)	15–60 min
	Sodium acid phosphate (Fleet enema)	15 min
Herbal Laxatives	There are numerous preparations available	Action often unpredictable and not generally recommended

* Currently unavailable

Some drugs or drug groups that can cause or aggravate constipation (MeReC 2004)¹

- Antacids containing aluminum or calcium
- Antispasmodics (e.g. propantheline, hyoscine-butyl-bromide [buscopan])
- Antidepressants, especially tricyclic antidepressants
- Antihistamines (especially older sedating ones such as promethazine [phenergan] or chlorpheniramine [polaramine])
- Antipsychotics
- Antiparkinsonism drugs including those with anticholinergic effects (e.g. benztropine, orphenadrine, procyclidine) and dopamine agonists (e.g. bromocriptine)
- Calcium supplements
- Calcium channel blockers, especially verapamil
- Diuretics (secondary to dehydration)
- Iron salts (irrespective of which preparation is used)
- Ondansetron
- Opioids
- Oxybutinin and similar drugs used for incontinence
- Proton pump inhibitors (e.g. omeprazole, lansoprazole)
- Vinca alkaloids (used in chemotherapy)