

DIGESTIVE
FITNESS
INFORMATION
BUREAU



> self-care

GETTING THINGS MOVING

Like any other health problem, constipation should not just be ignored in the vain hope that it may go away. Some anecdotal evidence suggests constipation can be associated with a number of health problems, with some sufferers claiming to have experienced the following symptoms: • irritability • headaches • fatigue

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that a build up of bulk in the bowel can lead to: • backache • painful periods • pain during sexual activity

In the long-term, diet modification – such as increasing fibre intake - and lifestyle changes may help to prevent the problem re-occurring, but often relief from constipation is needed straight away.

Eating your way to digestive fitness

Eating a high fibre diet is key to achieving and maintaining a healthy digestive system. The government recommends that we eat 18g of dietary fibre a day to help this process, but the average UK diet contains only around 12g of dietary fibre. However, following the tips below may help to increase your fibre intake:

- Replace frosted/sugary cereals with wholegrain cereals
- Eat wholegrain bread instead of white bread
- Try eating fresh or dried fruit eg. prunes as a snack instead of biscuits/crisps
- Try brown rice/pasta instead of white
- Eat a jacket potato (including the skin) rather than mashed/boiled potatoes

If this is the case, you may want to try one of a range of remedies you can buy over-the-counter from your pharmacist or supermarket.

Constipation remedies

There are four main types of remedies for relieving constipation:

i. Motility enhancers:

- These stimulate contractions of the muscles in the bowel to reduce the time it takes for waste to travel through the bowel.
- They normally work within 8-12 hours

Examples:

- Senna (eg. Senokot tablets)

Things to note:

Senna is a natural ingredient that has been used for centuries as a constipation remedy and its efficacy and tolerability are well documented. Senna works only in the colon, which is where constipation occurs. Other motility enhancers include Bisacodyl, which is a synthetic alternative to senna.

Why Senokot?

Containing natural senna from the senna plant, Senokot (Senokot Tablets, Senokot Syrup, Senokot Granules), provides predictable relief from constipation. The benefits of using Senokot are:

Senokot

- It works in harmony with the body, gently stimulating the natural process by which food moves through the digestive tract
- It works in a similar way to foods such as prunes and rhubarb, but you may have to eat 12 prunes to get the same effect
- It usually works in 8 -12 hours. So adults who take it before bedtime, are likely to wake up ready to go the next morning
- It can provide predictable relief. There is no need to worry about wanting to go to the loo suddenly, or your stools becoming too loose so you have a different problem to deal with!

Which form of Senokot is suitable for me?

Senokot is available from all good supermarkets and pharmacies in a variety of formats and pack sizes to suit different palates and needs. The Senokot products detailed below all contain senna:

Senokot Products	Pack Size	Dose
Senokot Tablets	6, 20, 60* and 100* tablets	Adults and children over 12 years: 2 tablets taken at night Children over 6: Consult your doctor Children six and under: Not recommended
Senokot Syrup (fruit flavoured)	100ml	Adults and children over 12: two 5ml spoonfuls taken at night Children over 6: one 5ml spoonful in the morning Children six and under: consult your doctor
Senokot Granules (chocolate flavoured)	100 grams*	Adults and children over 12 may take one 5ml spoonful at night. Children over six: Consult your doctor Children six and under: Not recommended
Senokot Double Strength	24* tablets	Adults and children over 12: Take 1-2 tablets at night Children 12 and under: Consult your doctor

* only available from pharmacies. Always read the label/leaflet



Things to think about

Diabetics – should choose the Senokot Tablets, which have negligible sugar content. Senokot Syrup and Senokot Granules contain sugar to make them more palatable and are therefore not suitable for diabetics.

Special diets – all Senokot products are gluten-free and suitable for vegetarians. Senokot syrup and Senokot granules are lactose-free.

Older people - unlike some medicines, there is no indication that the dosage of Senokot should be reduced for older people.

Pregnant or breast-feeding – it is important to seek advice from your doctor before using medicines in pregnancy or breastfeeding.

Always read the label/leaflet

Senokot Tablets, Senokot Syrup and Senokot Granules contain natural senna.

ii. Bulk forming agents:

- Contain natural fibre
- When they are taken with water, they increase the softness and bulk of waste matter in the bowel, making it easier to excrete
- Soften the stools so they are passed more easily

Examples:

- Ispaghula husk (e.g. Fybogel)
- Bran
- Sterculia

Things to note:

Ispaghula husk takes effect within 24 hours in the majority of people.

Fybogel

Why Fybogel?

Fybogel provides an easy way to increase your daily fibre intake and put yourself back on track.



The benefits of taking Fybogel are:

- It contains a concentrated source of natural fibre – ispaghula husk. One sachet twice daily provides a third of the recommended daily fibre intake, equivalent to about four to five bananas
- It works in natural harmony with your body
- You may find it difficult to take fibre-rich foods, or find it difficult to incorporate enough into your daily diet
- Its soluble formula makes it suitable for patients who have difficulty swallowing tablets or capsules
- It is better at absorbing water than bran, resulting in soft stools which are easier to pass
- Fybogel takes effect within 24 hours for the majority of sufferers.

Fybogel is available from pharmacies and comes in various pack sizes. Fybogel Natural Relief is also available in supermarkets for the relief of constipation.

FYBOGEL VARIANT	PACK SIZE	DOSE
Fybogel Orange	Sachets of 10	Adults and children over 12 years may take one sachet/dose in the morning or the evening. Children 6-12: half to one level 5ml spoonful of the granules depending on age, and size, morning or evening.
Fybogel Lemon	Sachets of 10	As above
Fybogel Orange 34-dose Multi-pack	150 grams	As above
Fybogel Natural Relief	Sachets of 7	As above

Things to think about:

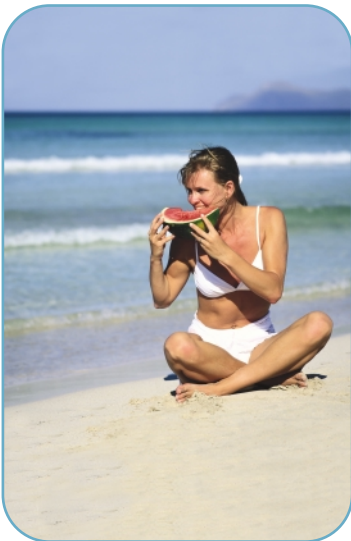
Diabetics – Fybogel is sweetened with aspartame (a source of phenylalanine) and, therefore, suitable for diabetics

Special diets – Fybogel is gluten and lactose free

Long-term constipation – Fybogel contains natural ispaghula husk. It can therefore be taken to maintain bowel regularity

Older people - Unlike with some other medicines, older people do not need to reduce the usual recommended dose of Fybogel

Pregnant or breast-feeding – Ispaghula husk is not absorbed by the body therefore Fybogel may be suitable during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. It is important to seek advice from your Doctor or Pharmacist



iii. Osmotic laxatives:

- Promote fluid retention in the bowel
- Keep the waste moist and, therefore, easier to pass

Examples:

- Glycerol (eg.Senokot Direct Relief Suppositories 4g Glycerol)
- Magnesium sulphate (Epsom Salts)
- Lactulose or lactitol (synthetic sugars)

Why Senokot Direct Relief?

Senokot Direct Relief provides predictable relief from constipation in the form of a suppository.



Senokot Product

Pack Size

Dose

Senokot Direct Relief

6 x 4 gram
suppositories

Adults and Children over 12: 1 suppository to
be inserted into the rectum
Children 12 and under: not recommended

Always read the label/leaflet

Things to note

Senokot Direct Relief Suppositories work in 15-60 minutes

iv. Lubricating agents/faecal softeners:

- Promote water penetration into hard stools making them easier to pass or simply help lubricate the hard stool.

Examples:

- Docusate sodium

Tips and guidelines for using constipation remedies

Q. Is it okay for me to self-medicate ie. choose and use a remedy independent of a doctor?

A. Many constipation remedies are available from both pharmacies and supermarkets and contain information as to their use. Ensure that you read the dosage information and warnings before taking the product. If you find that you still have questions or are unsure about anything, ask your Doctor or Pharmacist for advice.

Q. Can constipation remedies be taken for long-term use?

A. Some constipation remedies such as Fybogel are made from natural sources of fibre eg.

Fybogel contains natural ispaghula husk, and so can maintain regularity. Motility enhancers eg. Senokot, osmotic laxatives and lubricating agents are taken for the relief of occasional or non-persistent constipation. If symptoms persist for longer than three days, consult your doctor.

Q. When should I consult my doctor?

- A. It is advisable to consult your doctor if:*
- symptoms persists for longer than three days for no apparent reason*
 - you experience sharp or persistent stomach pain*
 - your abdomen is tender to the touch or hurts when you move*
 - you experience rectal bleeding*
 - you lose weight without trying*
 - you have accidentally taken too much*

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on digestive health is available by calling the Digestive Fitness Information Bureau on 020 7761 1796 or by visiting www.constipationadvice.co.uk

Alternatively for further information on Senokot or Fybogel you can call the Medical Information Unit at Reckitt Benckiser on 0500 455 456.

