

# LAXATIVES

Class	Mechanism	Uses/Time for Effect	Other Information
<b>Bulk Forming Laxatives</b>			
<i>methycellulose, bran, Fibercon</i>	-inhibits reabsorption—stool remains large & soft.	-should be part of good nutrition -chronic constipation; pregnancy -takes up to 72 hrs for effectiveness	-effective in those who don't regularly use laxatives -stress adequate water intake
<b>Stimulant Cathartics</b>			
<i>bisacodyl, cascara, castor oil, phenolphthalein, senna</i>	-inhibits reabsorption of water in the large intestine -stimulates the motility of the colon	-used for sigmoidoscopy, proctoscopy procedures -used for acute constipation  <i>Cascara/senna:</i> Usually works overnight; 6-12 hrs <i>Castor oil:</i> effective in 2-6 hrs	<b>MOST ABUSED</b> -watch for dehydration & electrolyte imbalance -should not be used more than 1/week -Do not use children & pregnant women  <i>Bisacodyl:</i> no milk or antacids within 1 hr of taking enteric coated tablet  <i>Cascara &amp; senna:</i> plant extracts cascara-milder; senna-more potent Both turn acid urine yellow-brown alkaline urine red  <i>Castor oil:</i> most potent of stimulants Works in SI  <i>Phenolphthalein (Ex-Lax):</i> turns alkaline urine pink
<b>Osmotic Cathartics</b>			
<i>glycerin, lactulose</i>	-attracts water to increase bulk, which stimulates the rectum	<i>Glycerin:</i> effective in 15-60 minutes <i>Lactulose:</i> long term treatment of chronic constipation	-watch for dehydration -electrolyte imbalance
<b>Saline Cathartics</b>			
<i>Magnesium carbonate, oxide, citrate, hydroxide or sulfate, e.g. MOM, Epsom salts</i>  <i>Sodium phosphate</i>	-concentrated solutions of these salts attract water osmotically into the lumen of the large intestine; resulting bulk stimulates peristalsis	-removal of parasites -elimination of poisons -used as adjunct w/ hyperosmotic laxative (NU-LYTELY) for procedures -empties bowel in 2-6 hrs (oral)	<b>-do not use w/ renally impaired;</b> cannot excrete small fraction of salt (Mg) that is absorbed systemically
<b>Wetting Agents</b>			
<i>docusate (dioctyl sulfosuccinate)</i> Colace, Surfak	-detergent surrounds fecal mass, trapping water so that the fecal mass remains large & soft	-used w/ patients who must avoid straining (hemorrhoids, heart pts)	-assess electrolytes (mineral oil) -Do not use w/ existing constipation; prophylaxis -long term use
<b>Hyperosmotic laxatives</b>			
<i>Nu-Lytely</i>	-incr. the water content leads to distention of bowel, incr. peristalsis & evacuation	-for procedures, e.g. colonoscopy -diarrhea occurs within 30-60 min	-not for normal constipation

