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## **Docusate sodium (Dioctyl, DulcoEase, Norgalax)**

Docusate sodium should only be used to provide short-term relief from constipation.

See a doctor if you are still constipated after five days.

Eating a healthy diet, drinking plenty of water and getting regular gentle exercise can all help maintain good bowel function.

### **About docusate sodium**

Type of medicine	Laxative
Used for	Constipation, and before some surgery and medical examinations
Also called	Dioctyl®; DulcoEase®; Norgalax®
Available as	Capsules, oral liquid and enema

Constipation can be caused by a poor diet, not drinking enough water and not going to the toilet as soon as you feel you need to. Pregnancy, a lack of exercise or movement (such as being ill in bed) and some medicines, including some painkillers, can also cause constipation.

However, many people take laxatives when they do not need to because they believe that they are constipated unless they go to the toilet every day. This is not the case. A useful definition of constipation is going to the toilet less frequently than is normal for you, and passing hard stools (faeces) when you do go.

Docusate sodium is thought to work by encouraging the muscles in your bowel to move waste products through your body. It also draws water into your bowel, which softens the stools, making them easier to pass. Docusate sodium can be bought without a prescription at pharmacies and other retail outlets.

Preparations containing docusate sodium are sometimes used to clear the bowel before some medical examinations. When it is used like this, you will be provided with a supply and full instructions for use from your hospital or clinic.

The rest of the information in this leaflet is about docusate sodium when it is used for constipation.

## **Before taking docusate sodium**

To make sure this is the right treatment for you, ask for advice from a doctor or pharmacist before you start taking docusate sodium if any of the following apply to you:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breastfeeding. This is because, while you are expecting or feeding a baby, you should only take medicines on the recommendation of a doctor.
- If it is for a child. This is because laxatives should only be given to children on the advice of a doctor or healthcare professional.
- If you have severe pain in your tummy (abdomen) or feel sick.
- If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
- If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine.

## How to take docusate sodium

- Before you start this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside your pack. The leaflet will give you more information about docusate sodium and a full list of side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- The instructions for taking docusate sodium will be on the label of the pack. You can take up to five 100 mg-strength capsules over the course of a day, although you may not need this many. Take the capsules one at a time, at regular intervals throughout the day. Take them with a drink of water to help you swallow.
- If docusate sodium liquid medicine has been prescribed for your child, carefully follow the instructions you are given by your doctor, as the dose will be adjusted according to their age and needs. Do not give docusate sodium to a child unless a doctor has prescribed it.
- Your child's dose of oral liquid medicine can be diluted in a beaker/glass of fruit squash or milk before taking. The mixture must then be swallowed within 30 minutes.
- Docusate sodium should only be used for a short time. This is because your bowel can start to rely on this type of laxative to make it work rather than working on its own. Although it may take a day or so for the capsules/liquid to start working, if you are still constipated after five days, you should make an appointment to speak with your doctor.

## Getting the most from your treatment

- A healthy diet containing fibre (wholegrain breads and cereals, bran, fruit and green leafy vegetables) with six to eight full glasses of water each day and daily exercise are important in maintaining healthy bowel function.
- You can read more about how to prevent or treat constipation in adults and children in the separate leaflets called [Constipation](#) (for adults) and [Constipation in Children](#).

## Can docusate sodium cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, all medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below lists some of the most common ones associated with docusate sodium. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve over the first few days of taking a new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following side-effects continue or become troublesome.

<b>Docusate sodium side-effects - these affect fewer than 1 in 100 people who take this medicine</b>	<b>What can I do if I experience this?</b>
Stomach cramps, feeling sick (nausea)	If this is troublesome speak with your pharmacist or doctor
Diarrhoea	Stop taking docusate sodium. This can be a result of taking it unnecessarily, or for too long

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to this medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

## How to store docusate sodium

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

# Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital at once. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

If you are having an operation or any dental treatment, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking.

If you buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable to take with your other medicines.

Never keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

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## Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, Dioctyl® 100 mg Capsules](#); UCB Pharma Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated September 2020.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Docusate Sodium Paediatric 12.5 mg/5 ml Oral Solution](#); Typharm Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated November 2019.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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