

Constipation (Acute)

Follow-up Advice	<p>Conditional Referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult GP if constipation persists beyond one week• Consult GP if patient is regularly requesting laxatives <p>Consider supply but advise patient to make appointment with GP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patient taking medication with recognised constipating effects. An Intervention MUR may be appropriate.
Counselling Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normal bowel frequency in the UK ranges from three times a day to once every three days; anything within this range is considered normal• A balanced diet is advised, containing whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Fluid intake is important, drinking six to eight glasses of water per day, but do realise this can be difficult for the frail and elderly. Avoid drinks containing caffeine as this may worsen constipation• If the patient is taking medication like opioids that can induce constipation- counsel accordingly• Regular doses of laxatives are rarely required and can cause a 'lazy' bowel• Senna is a stimulant laxative, effects within 8 -12 hours so dose is usually taken at night - it may colour the urine red or yellow• Ispaghula is a bulk forming laxative, requires adequate intake of fluid to avoid obstruction, effects may take several days. It must not be taken immediately before going to bed. Contraindicated if there is difficulty in swallowing.• Lactulose is an osmotic laxative, can take 2 - 4 days to work