



Managing Disimpaction and Constipation with Macrogol Laxatives

Faecal Impaction

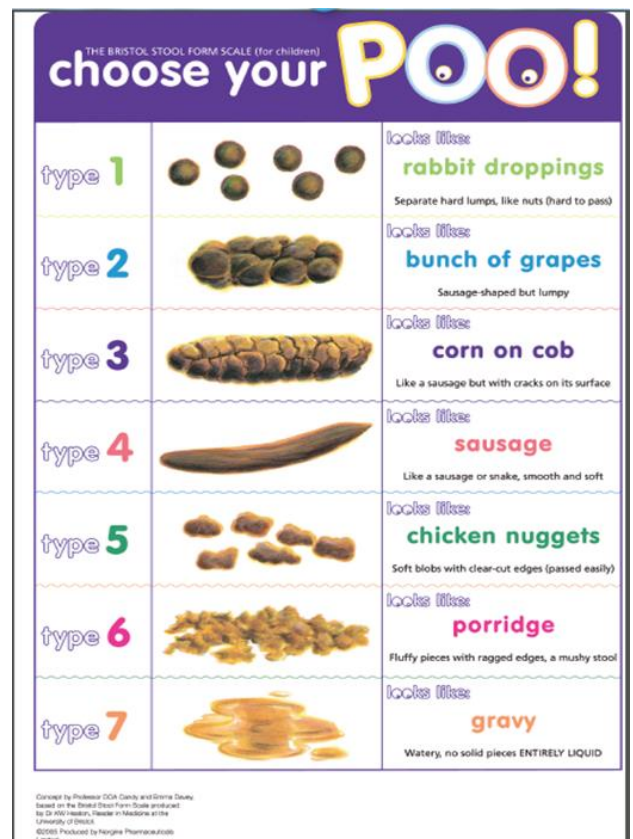
Some children are so constipated they cannot pass any poos at all, or cannot clear out all the poo that is there. These children are said to be impacted or to have faecal impaction. Often the first sign this has happened is that the child starts to soil (there is poo in their pants). This is not their fault. It is a sign that they need laxatives to treat the problem.

Treating impaction

All the poo that has become stuck has to be cleared out of the bowel, otherwise the soiling will continue and the constipation will not get better. To achieve this your child will need to take large doses of laxatives. The laxatives used most often are called macrogols (see below for further information).

Your doctor or nurse will tell you how many sachets of macrogol your child needs to take. The usual starting dose is one or two sachets per day. This is then increased by two sachets every day, or every other day. If your child is less than five years old, they will usually increase up to a maximum of 8 sachets per day. If your child is more than five years old, they will usually be told to increase up to a maximum of 12 sachets per day. This is sometimes called a disimpaction regime.

It usually takes 2 – 3 days for the macrogols to start to work. By day three you may start to notice a change in your child's bowel movements. The higher doses of macrogol will be continued until your doctor or nurse advises you to reduce the dose. The number of days your child will need to stay on the increasing or higher doses will depend on how long it takes for them to completely empty out their bowel. You will know that their bowel has emptied because their poo will be watery with no lumps (Type 7 on the poo chart). This



usually takes between five and seven days, although it could take longer.

When your child is passing lots of liquid poo, with no lumps, the dose of macrogol will be reduced to what is called a 'maintenance' dose. Your healthcare professional will tell you when to reduce the macrogol and what the new dose should be. Your child may have to continue to take macrogols for several months. This is to make sure that the constipation is completely better and will not come back again (relapse).

The usual maintenance dose is about half the disimpaction dose. This may need to be adjusted according to your child's progress. Your health care professional will advise you about this.

Treating constipation

When treating your child's constipation, the aim is to give them enough laxative to make sure that they are passing type 4 poos most days (see Poo chart). Sometimes children, who have had a lot of discomfort or pain when passing large hard, constipated poos, may be told to aim for a poo which is more like type 5. Some children need more than one type of medicine to treat their constipation. Their doctor or nurse should discuss this with you.

What are Macrogols?

Macrogols are a group of medicines called osmotic laxatives. They are used to treat constipation and faecal impaction. There are several medicines in the group known as macrogols. They are called Laxido, CosmoCol and Movicol. They all do the same thing. They keep water in the poo. This makes sure the poo stays soft as it moves through the bowel.

You should always read the leaflet that comes with any medicine that has been prescribed for your child. Always follow the advice given to you by your child's doctor or nurse. Talk to them if you have any concerns or questions.

How are Macrogols taken?

Each sachet of Macrogol should be mixed with water as directed (usually at least 62.5mls per sachet for the children's strength and 125mls per sachet for adult strengths. The instructions will tell you how much water to use).

When you have added the water stir the mixture until it is clear. The macrogol may then be diluted further or added to any other drink e.g. squash, milk etc. It is important to mix it in this order. The water is the active ingredient and is needs to be added on its own for the macrogol to work properly. The powder should never be sprinkled straight onto food or tipped straight into milk, juice or anything else.

What do I do if my child does not like the taste?

If your child does not like the taste of the macrogol, you can dilute it down with more water or add a flavouring such as a sugar-free squash. You could try buying a flavour of squash that your child has not had before and add that to the macrogol, after you have mixed it. Only let your child have that squash with the macrogol.

If your child will still not drink the macrogol then talk to their doctor or nurse. They may be able to prescribe a macrogol with a different flavour, or make other suggestions, or give your child a different type of laxative.

What is the correct dose of Macrogol?

Your healthcare professional will advise you about how much macrogol to give to your child. The dose may need to be adjusted until your child is pooing usually once or twice most days and their poo is not too soft and not too hard.

The usual dose of macrogol is between one and four sachets each day. Some children may need half a sachet and other children may need to take more than four sachets each day. The right dose for your child is the amount it takes to produce a poo that is soft (usually type 4 or 5 on the poo chart) and easy to pass.

When your child first starts taking macrogols it may take some time to get to the right dose. Your healthcare professional may suggest you adjust the dose depending on the frequency and consistency of the poo your child is passing. For example, if your child is taking one sachet and they start to pass type 2 or 3 stools, you may be advised to increase the macrogol to two sachets per day. If your child starts to pass type 5 or 6 stools you may be advised to reduce the amount of macrogol your child is taking.

It may take a few days for the poos to become soft, or they may be loose for a few days. You should follow your health care professional's advice. However, you should avoid changing the dose every day, or your child may alternate between hard and loose poos. If poos are hard, or your child does not open their bowels at all for two or more days, you may be advised to give extra macrogol. Some children may need a different type of laxative as well as the macrogol – your health care professional will discuss this with you, if they think it is needed.

Further advice

There is more information about constipation in the Bladder & Bowel UK leaflet Understanding Childhood Constipation available from <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Understanding-childhood-constipation-leaflet-advice-for-parents-and-carers.pdf>.

For further advice contact your health care professional or contact the Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline at email: bbbuk@disabledliving.co.uk or Telephone: 0161 607 8219

For further information about Bladder & Bowel UK services and resources visit our website at www.bbukuk.co.uk

To see the full range of Bladder & Bowel UK information leaflets about children and young people's bladder and bowel issues visit <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/children-resources/>

There is a video about how to use macrogol laxatives at www.thepoonurses.uk

