

## How to help constipation

Although laxatives are recommended to treat constipation there are things that you can do to improve the constipation and help prevent it coming back.



### Diet

Try and eat as much fibre (roughage) rich foods as you can. Adults need to eat around 30 grams of fibre per day. Most food packaging now shows the fibre content of food so it is easier to work out how much fibre is in the food you eat. Foods rich in fibre include fruit and vegetables as well as cereals and wholemeal bread and pasta. Just to note that eating more fibre may cause some discomfort and bloating at first so it is important to increase it slowly.



### Fluids

Try and drink around 2000-2500 mls per day which is about 10 cups. This is particularly important if you are increasing the fibre content of your diet.



### Exercise

Keeping active and walking can help in some cases.



### Keeping regular

Try and take time to go to the toilet regularly to open your bowels. Perhaps get into a routine at a certain time of day – having a warm drink with your breakfast and then sitting on the toilet about 20 minutes later can take advantage of what is known as the gastro—colic reflex and encourage the bowel into a regular pattern of working.

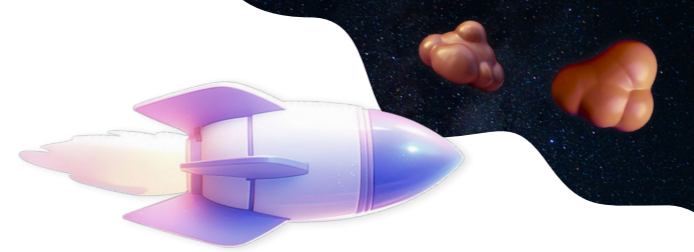
## BRISTOL STOOL SCALE

	<b>TYPE 1</b>	Separate hard lumps, like nuts (difficult to pass)
	<b>TYPE 2</b>	Sausage-shaped but lumpy
	<b>TYPE 3</b>	Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
	<b>TYPE 4</b>	Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
	<b>TYPE 5</b>	Soft blobs with clear cut edges
	<b>TYPE 6</b>	Fluffy pieces with ragged edges - a mushy stool
	<b>TYPE 7</b>	Watery, no solid pieces, entirely liquid (diarrhoea)

The Bristol Stool Form Scale was developed by researchers at the University of Bristol. It is a way of looking at stools. It helps to see if there is a relationship between what stools are like and how the bowel is working.

### References

1. Lewis SJ, Heaton KW. Stool form scale as a useful guide to intestinal transit time. *Scand J Gastroenterol* 1997;**32**:920-924



### Further information

For further information on CosmoCol® please speak to your GP, nurse or pharmacist.

You can also get useful information from:

**England NHS 111**  
111 / [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Scotland NHS 24**  
111 / [www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

**Wales/Galw Lechyd Cymru NHS Direct**  
0845 4647 / [www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)

**Northern Ireland NI Direct**  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

**Bladder & Bowel UK**  
0161 214 4591 / [bbuk@disabledliving.co.uk](mailto:bbuk@disabledliving.co.uk)

**Down Syndrome UK**  
[www.downsyndromeuk.co.uk](http://www.downsyndromeuk.co.uk)  
[www.positiveaboutdownsyndrome.co.uk](http://www.positiveaboutdownsyndrome.co.uk)

Alternatively, you can contact Stirling Anglian Pharmaceuticals at:

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**Always read the Patient Information Leaflet that comes with the pack of medicine.**

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**STIRLING ANGLIAN**  
PHARMACEUTICALS

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**CosmoCol®**

Macrogol 3350, sodium chloride, potassium chloride and sodium hydrogen carbonate

## Patient Guide



# CosmoCol® - Macrogol 3350 plus electrolytes

(also known as macrogol compound oral powder)

CosmoCol® is a laxative used to treat constipation and comes in powdered form. It comes in plain (with no flavour) as well as orange flavour, lemon and lime flavour and an orange and lemon lime flavour. Before taking this medicine, please read the information leaflet contained within the packaging.

If you are taking other medications or require thickened fluids, then do make sure you have spoken to your doctor or pharmacist before taking CosmoCol® as some medications may need to be taken at a different time from CosmoCol®.

CosmoCol®, like all macrogols, must not be used with starch-based thickeners. This is because macrogols and starch-based thickeners interact and result in thin watery liquid which may not then be swallowed safely.

Each sachet should be mixed with 125 mls of water, which is about half a glass or a quarter of a pint. It is the water that forms the active part of the laxative, so it is very important that it is always mixed with the correct amount.

The water that it is mixed with is not absorbed into the body (it binds with the poo/stool to bulk it up and keep it soft) so should not be included as part of your daily fluid intake.

## How to make up CosmoCol®

1



Open the sachet and pour the powder into a glass

2



Add 125 mls of water

3



Give it a good stir to help the powder dissolve – this could take a minute or two

4



The made-up solution will look from clear to cloudy

## How and when to take

Once made up CosmoCol® can be taken at any time with or without food.

The made up CosmoCol® solution can be covered and stored in the refrigerator if necessary. It can therefore be given in divided doses if you are unable to take it all at once. However, it needs to be used up within 24 hours and any solution left after that time should be thrown away.

It is best to try and take it at roughly the same time every day, if possible, as that way you are less likely to forget a dose. If you do forget a dose, then take it as soon as you remember but don't take double the dose for any that have been missed.



Lemon and Lime



Orange,  
Lemon and Lime



Orange



Plain

## How much to take

Constipation: The recommended dose is usually 1-3 sachets per day.

Your healthcare professional will advise regarding the appropriate starting dose.

CosmoCol® works by altering the consistency of the stool as well as how frequently it is passed. The usual aim is for you to be able to have a daily soft formed stool which is easy to pass with no straining.

You may be advised to increase the dose of CosmoCol® until you are able to pass a stool which is the right frequency and consistency for you. The usual maximum dose is up to 3 sachets a day.

CosmoCol®, like all macrogols, can take 1-2 days to work so you are advised to not alter the dose too frequently as otherwise it will be difficult to identify the most optimum dose for you to take, if you need to increase or decrease the dose then do it no more frequently than every other day. This will enable you to see what affect the changed dose has on your stool.

The usual treatment time for CosmoCol® is two weeks however some individuals with a chronic condition may well be advised by their healthcare professional to continue to take CosmoCol® for longer.

If you find in the longer term that your stool is becoming too soft or too frequent you will usually be advised to reduce the dose. Alternatively, if you find that your stool is becoming hard, infrequent, or difficult to pass then you may well be advised to increase the dose.



## Faecal impaction

Long term constipation can lead to faecal impaction, when the stool collects in your lower bowel and rectum and becomes so large that you are unable to pass it.

Your healthcare professional will advise you if you need to take the disimpaction dose. The treatment course for faecal impaction is 8 sachets a day for up to 3 days.

The sachets need not be taken all at once but can be taken in divided doses throughout the day. However, it all needs to be taken within 6 hours. For convenience it can be made up all at once in a jug and then kept in the fridge.

The disimpaction is said to be complete when you have passed a large amount of stool.

Once you have been disimpacted your healthcare professional will advise if you need to continue with CosmoCol®, to prevent the faecal impaction reoccurring, at the maintenance dose. This can vary but is usually between 1-2 sachets per day.

## Side Effects

Like all medicines CosmoCol®, can cause some side effects, although not everyone will experience them. Common ones include bloating, flatulence and nausea. For more information about side effects please read the leaflet included with this medication. If you do experience any side effects, including any not listed, then do speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.