

Macrogol for constipation

This leaflet is about the use of macrogol for chronic constipation and faecal impaction (severe constipation) in children.



This leaflet has been written for parents and carers about how to use this medicine in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adult patients. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

Do not give macrogol powder without water. It will not work properly and risk causing dehydration.

Name of drug

Macrogol (also called macrogol-3350 or polyethylene glycol)
Common brands: Movicol®, Movicol®-Half, Lax-Sachets®, Molaxole®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

If constipation (difficulty doing a poo) is severe, the faeces (poo) may become hardened and difficult to pass (this is called faecal impaction). Constipation can make your child feel very poorly.

Macrogol is a type of laxative. It should help to produce a comfortable bowel motion (poo) even if your child has been constipated for a long time. The aim of treatment is that your child produces soft stools (poo) regularly.

What is Macrogol available as?

Macrogol is a powder that comes in sachets. Each sachet contains 13.12 g of macrogol.

Half powder sachets contains 6.56 g of macrogol.


- Both these contain the artificial sweetener acesulfame potassium (E950).

When should I give Macrogol?

- Macrogol can be given at any time of day.
- Your doctor will develop a plan that tells you how many sachets of macrogol you can give your child in a 12-hour day. Your doctor will explain how to adjust the plan so that your child produces regular soft stools.
- Your doctor will also tell you the maximum number of sachets that your child can have in one day.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of macrogol (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions.**

How should I give it?

Macrogol **must** be given with water. Choose an amount of water that your child can drink in one go. This amount must be at least 125 mL (about half a glass of water) per sachet for

macrogol or at least 62.5 mL (about a quarter glass of water) for macrogol half sachets.

If your child does not drink enough water with it, the medicine will not work properly and your child may become dehydrated.

- Open the sachet and pour the contents into the water.
- Stir well until all the powder has dissolved and the mixture is clear or slightly hazy.
- You can add orange squash to the drink if your child doesn't like the taste. The medicine will still work properly.
- Make sure your child drinks it all. If they cannot drink it all in one go, they can drink it over about 30 minutes. It may help to use a straw.
- If your child needs to take the medicine at school, you can make the mixture at home for your child to take to school. You must tell the school that you are doing this.

When should the medicine start working?

It may be a few hours, or sometimes a day or more, before your child produces a soft stool (poo). This will depend on how bad the constipation is and its cause. Your doctor may give you a plan to give more sachets in a day if the macrogol does not appear to be working at first.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of macrogol, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait at least 4 hours before giving any more macrogol.

If your child is sick again, seek advice from your GP, pharmacist or hospital. They will decide what to do based on your child's condition and the specific medicine involved.

What if I forget to give it?

If you miss a dose, give your child the missed dose as soon as you remember.

You must give each sachet with one glass of water. Do not put two sachets together into one drink.

What if I give too much?


It is unlikely that you will give your child too much macrogol. If you think you may have given your child too much macrogol, contact your doctor or the NZ National Poisons Centre 0800 764 766 (0800 POISON).

Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects you must do something about

-  If your child is sick (vomits) often, or if the vomit is dark green or brown, they may have a blockage of the gut. Do not give your child any more macrogol, and contact your doctor straight away.
- If your child feels weak, seems very thirsty and has a headache, they may be dehydrated. Contact your doctor for advice.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may have stomach ache, feel sick (nausea) or be sick (vomit) or may feel bloated. They may also get diarrhoea. These effects are more likely if they have several sachets of macrogol in one day to treat severe constipation. These side-effects can also be related to the constipation. They should settle down once your child starts to pass soft stools regularly.
- If your child is feeling sick or vomits only once or twice, continue to give macrogol but give it less often during the day.


There may, sometimes, be other side-effects that are not listed above. If you notice anything unusual and are concerned, contact your doctor. You can report any suspected side-effects to your doctor, pharmacist, or the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM) at <https://nzphvc.otago.ac.nz/carm/>.

Can other medicines be given at the same time as macrogol?


- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about this medicine?

- Macrogol must be given with water. Otherwise the medicine will not work and may make your child dehydrated.

-  Never give the powder without water.

General advice about medicines

- Only give this medicine to your child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.
-  If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away.
- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the macrogol sachets in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. The sachets do not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Stir it well before giving to your child. You can keep a mixture of macrogol powder and water in the fridge for up to 6 hours.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about macrogol and about other medicines used to treat constipation and faecal impaction.

You can also get useful information from:

Kidshealth

<http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/constipation>

<http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/laxatives>

Ministry of health

<http://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments>

NICE - Information for parents and carers about constipation

<http://publications.nice.org.uk/constipation-in-children-and-young-people-ifp99>

www.nzfchildren.org.nz

