



Stool Softeners

Names Docusate is the generic name of the most common stool softener. Brand names include Colace® and Correctal® Soft Gels. There are other brand names for docusate. There are also other types of stool softeners.

What Are They Used For? Stool softeners are used on a short-term basis to relieve constipation by people who should avoid straining during bowel movements. They soften stools, making them easier to pass.

How is it Administered?

- Stool softeners come as a capsule, tablet, liquid, and syrup.
- Follow the directions on the package or your prescription label carefully. Take stool softeners exactly as directed by your doctor.
- A stool softener usually is taken at bedtime.
- Take capsules and tablets with a full glass of water. The liquid comes with a specially marked dropper for measuring the dose. Ask your pharmacist to show you how to use it if you have difficulty.
- Do not crush, chew, break, or open a docusate capsule or tablet. Swallow it whole.
- Mix the liquid (not the syrup) with 4 ounces (120 milliliters) of milk, fruit juice, or formula to mask its bitter taste.
- One to 3 days of regular use usually are needed for this medicine to take effect.
- Do not take stool softeners for more than 1 week unless your doctor directs you to.

What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?

Tell your doctor:

- if you are allergic to any drugs

This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you are taking.

What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

Although side effects from stool softeners are not common, they can occur. Tell your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms:

- stomach or intestinal cramps or upset stomach
- throat irritation (from oral liquid)
- vomiting

When To Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor immediately if you experience:

- any sign of an allergic reaction: Itching or hives, swelling in your face, mouth, throat or hands, chest tightness, trouble breathing, or fast or irregular heartbeat
- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- fever

What Else Should I Know About Stool Softeners?

- Do not take mineral oil while taking stool softeners.
- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom).
- Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed. Talk to your pharmacist about the proper disposal of your medication.
- If you would like more information, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.