Specialist Continence Advisory Service

Local Partnerships

You may also find our other Specialist Continence leaflet series useful. You can view or download them from the Trust’s website at:
www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/continence-advisory-service

Specialist Continence Advisory Service/Community Nurse contact details:

www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

Loperamide (Immodium)

Information about how to take Loperamide medication to help you with your bowel problem
What is Loperamide?

Loperamide is one of a group of drugs called antidiarrhoeals. These drugs are designed to thicken your stools and so reduce diarrhoea. It will also firm up slightly soft stools.

How does it work?

Loperamide works by slowing down the passage of food through the gut and encouraging more uptake of water by the body from the waste in the large bowel. The longer food takes to pass through the gut, the more time there is for water to be absorbed from it through the gut wall. The stools that are then produced are thicker and firmer.

What dose do I take?

People vary a lot in their response to Loperamide so a suggested starting dose will be discussed with you by your healthcare professional.

The dosage sometimes needs adjusting to find the dose that will control your bowels without constipating you. The more you take the firmer your stools will become. If you take more than you need you may become constipated. If you do not take enough your stools will remain loose.

Dosage

It is usual to start on a low dose and increase it slowly over a few days so you can judge how your body is responding. Loperamide comes in capsules, tablets, syrup and melts. Syrup can only be obtained by a prescription from your healthcare professional.

Tablets and capsules= 2mg
Melts= 2mg (dissolve on the tongue)
Syrup= 1mg in 5mls (or 0.5mg in 2.5mls)
Maximum dose prescribed by a healthcare professional is 16mg in 24 hours.
Maximum dose if self medicating and bought over the counter is 12mg over 24 hours.

It is best to take Loperamide half an hour before a meal. This will help to slow down usual gut activity that is stimulated by eating.

Most people find that their bowel is most active in the morning and so Loperamide may be more beneficial if taken before breakfast. The medication starts to work within half an hour of taking it and is effective for 8-12 hours.

A dose last thing at night may help with early morning frequency.

Side effects

Loperamide is a very safe drug which is not addictive and it is rare to have any serious side effects. Your prescribing healthcare professional will consider possible interactions with any current medications you are taking.

Some common side effects include:

♦ Constipation
♦ Dizziness
♦ Nausea
♦ Headaches

If you develop diarrhoea because of an infection or food poisoning, then you should stop taking the Loperamide until this has resolved.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or physiotherapist or contact your GP or community pharmacist.