

## Guide to Over the Counter Laxatives

1. Milk of Magnesia – (active ingredient: magnesium hydroxide). This is an osmotic laxative (draws water into the bowel) to make stools softer and easier to pass. Follow package instructions: generally start with one to two tablespoons per day. May increase as needed.
2. Magnesium Citrate – (active ingredient: magnesium citrate). This is also an osmotic laxative. May be used every third day to produce bowel movements. Generally take one-third to one-half bottle every third day as needed to produce a BM. Some patients may need to use a small amount of this daily to have a BM.
3. Docusate Sodium (Colace) or Docusate Calcium (Surfak) – These are stool softeners, and make stools easier to pass. Generally one capsule once or twice daily is sufficient. Please avoid this combination product: Peri-colace (also contains a stimulant laxative casanthrol).

### **Please avoid the following:**

Senna (Ex-Lax)

Senokot

Cascara

Bisacodyl (Correctol, Dulcolax, Feen-a-Mint, many “store brand” laxatives)

Per-colace (casanthrol)

Natural herbal tea laxatives (usually contains senna)

Aloe vera

These are all considered stimulant laxatives. If used long term, they will cause a dependence on them. They also cause a lot of pain and cramping in most cases. May also discolor the inside of the colon a dark brown.

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