

LOPERAMIDE (Gastro-stop, Imodium, Lopedium, Gastrex, Diareze, Diacare)

What is Loperamide?

Loperamide is an anti-diarrhoeal drug which is used to reduce diarrhoea and firm up stools. It works by slowing down the passage of food through the gut and allowing more water to be taken up by the body from food as it passes through the bowel. This results in firmer and thicker stools. Loperamide is also used in people with high output stomas to reduce the amount of output and prevent dehydration.

How do I take it?

Loperamide is best taken $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour before a meal. Your doctor will initially prescribe a dose that is appropriate for your condition but you may need to adjust this dose according to your symptoms. If you take more than you need, you may feel constipated. If you don't take enough, your stools may remain soft or loose. It is usual to start on a low dose and build up slowly over a few days. Taking a dose of loperamide before bed may help to with early morning frequency.

You can take up to 8 tablets (16mg) per day over a long period of time. Doses over 16mg per day should only be taken under the guidance of your gastroenterologist. Loperamide can be purchased over the counter at any pharmacy.

Can I take other medications?

Loperamide can be taken with other medicines but is important you tell your doctor about any other medicines you are taking. This includes over-the-counter medicines, patches, eye drops, and herbal or alternative therapies.

What are the side effects?

Most people tolerate loperamide very well. Common side effects include constipation, abdominal cramping and nausea. Uncommon side effects include rash, vomiting, metallic taste in the mouth, dry mouth, restlessness, blurred vision and headache. A severe allergic reaction is a very rare side effect of loperamide.

Pregnancy and Loperamide

Loperamide is generally considered safe to use in pregnancy.

Who do I contact for help?

You can contact the IBD Helpline on (03) 9288 3592 during business hours. Private patients can contact their gastroenterologist's private rooms directly.

For urgent matters outside of business hours, contact the St Vincent's Hospital Switchboard on (03) 9288 2211. Ask to speak with the gastroenterologist on call. In an emergency you should go to your local Emergency Department or call an ambulance (dial 000)