

Patient Information

Pelvic Floor Service

How to take Loperamide (Imodium)

Introduction

Loperamide (brand name Imodium) is a medication that is often used for travellers' diarrhoea. However, Loperamide can also be used if you suffer with chronic loose stools and have ongoing difficulty with bowel control.

The following information is intended only for patients under the care of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Pelvic Floor Service. It may not cover everything you want to know so please ask if you need further advice.

Normal bowel function

Food is broken down as it passes through your digestive system to provide your body with the nutrients it needs. Any food you can't digest is dried out as it passes through your bowel and forms into stools (poo). As the stools enter your rectum the nerves in the walls of your rectum sense the pressure. These nerves tell you that something is there and whether it is solid, liquid or wind. Your sphincter muscles sit just inside your back passage. They keep your stools in until you are ready to go to the toilet.

Chronic functional diarrhoea

Your stools may be looser and more difficult to control if food passes through too quickly or the bowel is less able to dry out waste. Common causes of chronic diarrhoea include diet, stress, medical conditions, some medications, bowel or pelvic surgery or radiotherapy. Childbirth injuries, pelvic floor weakness or conditions affecting related nerve pathways are some of the causes of chronic diarrhoea. We rule out any serious causes for your diarrhoea before considering the use of Imodium so it is important that you tell us if you have any new bowel symptoms.

What is Loperamide?

Loperamide (Imodium) is an anti-diarrhoeal medication that slows down your digestive system. This allows more water to be absorbed from the stools, making them firmer and easier to control. It is widely available over the counter as tablets, capsules, soft-gel liquid capsules or dissolving tablets. Loperamide syrup is only available on prescription. All forms of Loperamide can be provided on prescription if you need an ongoing, regular supply.

How do I take Loperamide?

Do not follow the manufacturer's instructions as this medication has not been recommended for acute travellers' diarrhoea.

Everyone responds differently to Loperamide so you will need to try a low dose at first to see how much you need to take to slow down your bowels. You should take enough Loperamide to firm up your stools but not too much so that you avoid becoming constipated.

Start with a low dose for the first week. If this has no effect you can increase the dose until your stools firm up. Reduce how often you take Loperamide if you think you are getting constipated. Stop if you become constipated and restart at a lower dose when your bowels start working again.

Loperamide **2mg** tablets/capsules:

- Imodium Plus With Simeticone for trapped wind/bloating
 - Imodium Instants Dissolves on the tongue without water
 - Imodium Liquicaps A soft, easy to swallow capsule
- Loperamide syrup:
 - Loperamide **1mg in 5ml** – equivalent to half a tablet so easier to regulate smaller doses. Prescription only medication.

Seek further medical advice if the maximum dose of Loperamide (16mg/day) does not control your symptoms.

When should I take Loperamide?

Loperamide starts to work within 30 minutes of taking it and it is effective for 8 to 12 hours. You can take Loperamide either 30 minutes before a meal or when your bowels are generally more active.

If your bowel is generally active all the time you can take it twice a day morning and evening. Alternatively you can take it as and when needed such as before you plan to go out or before a long journey. This may help to reduce any worries about your bowels when you are away from home.

Risks, benefits, side effects

Antidiarrhoeal medication may cause constipation. Always read the label, list of interactions and safety advice found on the drug information leaflet within the box.

It is safe to use Loperamide on a regular basis or as necessary to thicken your stools. It is uncommon to experience side effects from taking this medication.

What if Loperamide doesn't help?

You may need a different dose or an alternative anti-diarrhoeal may be advised. Dietary changes, pelvic floor exercises, other bowel management options or even surgery may be considered if appropriate. Please speak to your health care professional for further advice.

Contact details for further information

Pelvic Floor Nurse Specialist

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital

Telephone: 01743 261083 (24hr answerphone)

Further information is available from:

- **Patient Advise and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS will act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, they can also help you get support from other local or national agencies. PALS, is a confidential service.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

- **The Pelvic Floor Society**

A national multi-professional body involved in supporting excellence in clinical practice, education and research, clinical standards, patient information and engagement in the commissioning of pelvic floor services.

Telephone: 020 7973 0307

Website: www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk

- **Bladder and Bowel Foundation**

For more information about bladder and bowel conditions, treatment and support

Telephone: 0870 770 3246

Website: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

- **Support from Imodium**

Online information only

Website: www.imodium.co.uk

- **NHS 111**

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

- **Patient UK**

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self-help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

- **Self-Help UK**

This is a directory of self-help groups and charities.

Website: www.selfhelp.org.uk

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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