

Training your team: Lower GI exercise

Products for gastrointestinal conditions are among the top five biggest selling OTC categories.¹ Diarrhoea alone is among the most common problems that customers turn to healthcare professionals for advice.²

As a team, role play how you would manage the following customers. Have your team/team member play their usual role, while you take the part of the customer.

Customer 1: A 23-year old man:

"I've had a bad curry, what works quickly for diarrhoea?"



Customer profile

- He has had diarrhoea since the previous evening
- The diarrhoea is loose but not extremely watery
- He has felt a bit nauseous but no vomiting
- He also had some indigestion after lunch today and has taken some antacids to manage symptoms.

Did your team member correctly identify that this customer's diarrhoea may be exacerbated by his antacid? Magnesium-containing antacids can cause diarrhoea.² If not, more information on lower GI conditions is available via a downloadable summary sheet.



What treatment was suggested?

- Although most customers may not need an anti-diarrhoea treatment, for those who want fast relief of diarrhoea symptoms, loperamide can be used³
- Oral rehydration salts can also be recommended to replace lost fluids if the patient is at risk.⁴

Was format considered?

- Customers with diarrhoea may seek fast-relief
- Loperamide can start working within an hour⁶ and there are oro-dispersible formulations available.

What lifestyle advice was offered?

- Customers can continue to eat, though lighter foods are best, e.g. salty soup, rice, pasta, salty crackers.⁵

Customer 2: An early 50s woman:

“I’m looking for something for constipation, what would you recommend that works?”



Customer profile

- She has occasional constipation where her stools are soft but she feels as though ‘there is more to come’
- This is no different to her usual symptoms
- She has no other health problems, but takes paracetamol for the occasional tension-type headache.

Did your team member probe red flag symptoms, such as unexplained weight loss or abdominal pain?⁷ If not, more information on lower GI conditions is available via a downloadable summary sheet.



What treatment was suggested?

- The customer should be offered advice on managing constipation through dietary and lifestyle changes⁸
- If dietary/lifestyle changes have been tried but have been ineffective, laxatives can be recommended⁸
 - A bulk-forming laxative, such as ispaghula husk (e.g. Fybogel) is a first-line choice for constipation.⁸ This can fully work within two to three days⁹
 - As her stools are soft but she does not feel as though she has emptied her bowel, a stimulant laxative, such as senna, (e.g. Senokot Tablets/ Syrup or Max Strength) could be an alternative recommendation. Stimulant laxatives can start to work within 6-12 hours⁹
- For customers with hard stools that are difficult to pass, recommend an osmotic laxative, such as a macrogol, in addition to/instead of a bulk-forming laxative.⁸ These can work within two to three days.⁹

Was format considered?

- Bulk forming laxatives, such as ispaghula husk, are available as granules
- Stimulant laxatives, such as senna, are available in tablets or syrups. The latter is a good option for those who have difficulty swallowing.

What lifestyle advice was offered?

- The priority is to encourage a change in diet, gradually increasing fibre intake to 30 g per day, eat a balanced diet containing wholegrains, fruits and vegetables, increase fluid and sorbitol intake, as well as taking regular exercise.^{8,10}

Customer 3: A 28-year old woman

"I'm having a bout of IBS, what should I do?"



Customer profile

- She was diagnosed with IBS five years ago by her GP
- Her main symptoms are abdominal cramping, bloating and flatulence
- She hasn't identified any triggers but says she has been very busy at work at the moment
- She is not taking any medicines currently and has no other medical conditions.

Did your team member clarify that there had been no changes to her usual IBS symptoms and exclude any red flag symptoms, such as a change in bowel habit or weight loss with rectal bleeding?⁷ For more information, see the understanding lower GI conditions module.

What treatment was suggested?

- Treatment for IBS should focus on the predominant symptoms experienced by the individual¹¹

- In this customer, a treatment containing simeticone (e.g. Senocalm) can relieve gas-related IBS symptoms, such as cramping and bloating
- An alternative could be recommending a combination of ispaghula husk (to increase fibre) plus an anti-spasmodic, such as mebeverine relieve symptoms of IBS such as abdominal pain (e.g. Fybogel Mebeverine).



What lifestyle advice was offered?

- Tips that may help IBS include: eating regularly and not skipping meals, drinking at least eight cups of fluid per day, especially water or herbal teas, limiting tea and coffee intake to three cups per day, limiting fresh fruit to three portions per day, avoiding bran and sorbitol (if suffering from diarrhoea)¹¹
- Patients can be encouraged to identify any associated stress, anxiety, and/or depression and manage accordingly.¹²

References:

1. Proprietary Association of Great Britain. Annual Review 2016-17. Accessed January 2018. <https://www.pagb.co.uk/latest-news/pagb-annual-review-2016-17/2>. Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Diarrhoea – adult's assessment. March 2013. Accessed January 2018. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/diarrhoea-adults-assessment> 3. British National Formulary. Treatment summaries. Diarrhoea. Accessed January 2018. <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/treatment-summary/acute-diarrhoea.html> 4. NHS Choices. Diarrhoea. Accessed January 2018. <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea/Pages/Introduction.aspx> 5. Core. Acute diarrhoea. Accessed March 2018. <http://corecharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CORE-PATIENT-INFORMATION-ACUTE-DIARRHOEA-1.pdf> 6. Imodium Classic 2mg Capsules. Summary of Product Characteristics. July 2017. Accessed January 2018. <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/23025> 7. NICE. Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Gastrointestinal tract (lower) cancers - recognition and referral. September 2015. Accessed January 2018. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/gastrointestinal-tract-lower-cancers-recognition-and-referral> 8. NICE. Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Constipation. June 2017. Accessed January 2018. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/constipation> 9. Patient. Laxatives. May 2014. Accessed January 2018. <https://patient.info/health/laxatives> 10. NHS Choices. Constipation. Accessed January 2018. <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation/Pages/Introduction.aspx> 11. NICE. Irritable bowel syndrome in adults: diagnosis and management. February 2008. Updated April 2017. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg61> 12. NICE. Clinical Knowledge Summaries. Irritable bowel syndrome. October 2017. Accessed January 2018. <https://cks.nice.org.uk/irritable-bowel-syndrome>

Essential Information:

Senokot Tablets: Each tablet contains senna fruit equivalent to 7.5 mg of hydroxyanthracene glycosides calculated as sennoside B (GSL). Indications: For the relief of short-term, occasional constipation. MA Holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd, Hull, HU8 7DS. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/6883>

Senokot 7.5 mg/5 ml Syrup: Each 5 ml of Senokot Syrup contains calcium sennosides equivalent to 7.5 mg per 5 ml total sennoside (calculated as sennoside B) (GSL). Indications: A laxative for the relief of occasional or non-persistent constipation. MA Holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd, Hull, HU8 7DS. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/23401>

Senokot Max Strength: Each tablet contain powdered senna fruit (pods) equivalent to 15mg hydroxyanthracene glycosides (GSL). Indications: For the relief of short-term, occasional constipation. MA Holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd, Hull, HU8 7DS. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/23325>

Senokot Dual Relief Tablets: Each tablet contains: -100 mg Senna Leaf Tinnevely (*Cassia angustifolia* Vahl), 45 mg Cape Aloes (*Aloe ferox* Mill), 30 mg Cascara Bark (*Rhamnus purshianus* D.C.), 30 mg Dandelion Root (*Taraxacum officinale* F.H. Wigg), 15 mg Fennel Fruit (*Foeniculum vulgare* var. dulce Miller) (GSL). Indications: A traditional herbal medicinal product used for the short-term relief of occasional constipation and bloating, based on traditional use only. MA Holder: Potters Ltd, Wigan, WN5 0JZ. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications, and method of use can be found at: www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/24203

Fybogel Hi-Fibre Orange: Contains ispaghula husk 3.5g. Indications: For the treatment of patients requiring a high fibre regimen: for example, for the relief of constipation, including constipation in pregnancy and the maintenance of regularity; for the management of bowel function in patients with haemorrhoids (GSL). MA Holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare UK Limited, HU8 7DS. -Information about this product including adverse reactions, precautions, contra-indications and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/23324>

Fybogel Mebeverine PL00063/0025: A sachet contains 3.5g ispaghula husk BP and 135mg mebeverine hydrochloride BP. Therapeutic indications: For the symptomatic relief of irritable bowel syndrome. Posology and administration: Adults and children over 12: One sachet morning and evening, taken half an hour before meals. A third dose may be taken before the midday meal if necessary. Not recommended for Children below 12. The contents of one sachet should be stirred into a glass of cold water (150 ml minimum) and drunk immediately. The product should be taken during the day at least ½ to 1 hour before or after intake of other medicines. Contraindications: Hypersensitivity to ispaghula husk, mebeverine or to any of the excipients. Sudden change in bowel habit that has persisted more than two weeks. Undiagnosed rectal bleeding and failure to defecate following the use of a laxative. Patients suffering from abnormal constrictions in the gastro-intestinal tract, with diseases of the oesophagus and cardia, potential or existing intestinal blockage (ileus), paralysis of the intestine or megacolon. Difficulty in swallowing or any throat problems. Precautions and warnings: Not recommended in children below 12 years of age. Laxative bulk producers should be used before using other purgatives if change of nutrition is not successful. Fybogel Mebeverine should not be taken in the dry form and should always be taken mixed with fluid. Gastrointestinal obstruction or impaction have been reported with hydrophilic mucilloid preparations when taken with insufficient liquid. Ispaghula husk should not be used by patients with faecal impaction, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting unless advised by a doctor. If abdominal pain occurs or in cases of any irregularity of faeces, the use of ispaghula husk should be discontinued and medical advice must be sought. When taken with inadequate fluid amounts, bulk forming agents can cause obstruction of the throat and oesophagus with choking and intestinal obstruction. Symptoms can be chest pain, vomiting, or difficulty in swallowing or breathing. Supervision required in the case of debilitated patients and / or elderly patients. Ispaghula husk should not be used together with medicinal products known to inhibit peristaltic movement. This product should not be taken immediately before going to bed. The product should not be given to patients with phenylketonuria. Consult your doctor if you have developed new symptoms, or if your symptoms worsen, or if they do not improve after two weeks of treatment. Warning on hypersensitivity reactions: In individuals with continued occupational contact to powder of *Plantago ovata* seeds (e.g. healthcare workers and caregivers) allergic sensitisation may occur due to inhalation. Product contains potassium (97.6mg/sachet), sodium (58.9mg/sachet) & aspartame which should be considered in patients on a controlled salt diet or reduced kidney function. Side effects: Immune system disorders: hypersensitivity disorders. Eye disorders: conjunctivitis; Respiratory, Thoracic and Mediastinal Disorders: Rhinitis; Gastrointestinal Disorders: Flatulence, abdominal distension, intestinal obstruction, oesophageal obstruction, faecal impaction; Skin and Subcutaneous Tissue Disorders: skin rash. Legal category: P. Product licence Numbers: PL 00063/0025. Licence Holder: Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Limited HU8 7DS. Last revision of SmPC: July 2017. MRRP: £6.99 Ten Sachets. For full information refer to: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/product/1099>

Senocalm is a medical device. Always read the instructions.

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard. Adverse events should also be reported to Reckitt Benckiser Healthcare (UK) Ltd on: 0333 200 5345.