

**Docusate for faecal softening / constipation
(Coloxyl®)****SESLHDPR/451****POLICY STATEMENT**

The Registered Nurse (RN), Registered Midwife (RM) or Enrolled Nurse (EN) is authorised to instigate nurse/midwife-initiated medication without an authorised prescriber's order under the specific circumstances set out in the **INDICATIONS** section and provided there are no contraindications present.

An Enrolled Nurse (EN) may administer 'nurse-initiated medication' to children greater than 16 years and adults. The EN must confirm verbally with their supervising Registered Nurse prior to the administration that the medication is appropriate and safe for the patient. An EN with a notation because they do not hold board approved qualifications in the administration of medicines is NOT authorised to administer any medication.

It is important for nursing and midwifery staff to remain aware that:

- Minor ailments may be symptoms of other more serious diseases or may be adverse reactions to medication already prescribed
- Nurse-initiated medication may interact with the patient's prescribed medication
- The maximum daily recommended dose of the medication must not be exceeded.¹

The administering nurse/midwife must record the administration on an approved paper or electronic medication chart, clearly indicating that the medicine was nurse initiated.

If the patient continues to require the medication (i.e., more than two doses in 24 hours) then a medical officer (MO) must be consulted and a regular or PRN order obtained.

A change in the patient's condition such as newly occurring or increasing severity of symptoms must be reported to the MO and investigated.

INDICATIONS

Faecal softener for management of reversible constipation and reduction of straining in patients 12 years and over

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Hypersensitivity to the active substance or to any of the excipients.

PRECAUTIONS

Safe in pregnancy (category A) and breastfeeding

HISTORY/ASSESSMENT

- Assess patient's usual bowel habits (frequency of stools, volume, colour, consistency)
- Patient's current bowel status (last time bowel opened)
- Assess for alterations in bowel patterns
- Refer to medical officer if patient has the following symptoms: blood in stools, weight loss, abdominal pain
- Assess patient for faecal impaction.
- Review patient's current medication for medicines which may cause constipation

NURSE/MIDWIFE INITIATED MEDICINE PROTOCOL

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Caution: CHECK for allergies and/or contraindications			
Drug	Dose	Route	Frequency
Docusate 50 mg tablets	50 mg to 150 mg = 1 to 3 tablets	Oral	Once
Give with plenty of fluid and NOT with any other medicines			

MONITORING - POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS/INTERACTIONS

Monitor bowel function and complete stool chart

Adverse effects: Abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, nausea, rash

Docusate tablets may affect absorption of other medicines.

DOCUMENTATION

A record of the administration must be made on the approved paper or electronic medication chart noting that the medication was nurse initiated.

A further record of the medication administered including indication, dose and effect must be included in the patient's health care record.

PRACTICE POINTS

- Onset of action is 1 to 3 days.
- Ensure adequate fluid intake (but consider risk of fluid overload in patients with heart failure or renal impairment).
- Ensure adequate dietary fibre intake.
- Encourage mobility, where possible.
- Consider review by dietician, if appropriate.

REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

1. [NSW Health Policy Directive Medication Handling PD2022_032](#)
2. [Australian Medicines Handbook](#). Docusate. South Australia: Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd, January 2023.

NURSE/MIDWIFE INITIATED MEDICINE PROTOCOL

**Docusate for faecal softening / constipation
(Coloxyl®)****SESLHDPR/451****REVISION and APPROVAL HISTORY**

Date	Version Number	Author and Approval
July 2015	DRAFT	Pharmacy Department, Prince of Wales Hospital
September 2015	1	Approved by SESLHD Drug & QUM Committee
May 2018	DRAFT 2	Reviewed by nursing and pharmacy staff. Minor wording updates made. References updated.
July 2018	2	Approved by SESLHD Quality Use of Medicines Committee
September 2021	DRAFT 3	Reviewed by nursing and pharmacy staff. Minor wording updates
October 2021	3	Approved by SESLHD Quality Use of Medicines Committee
June 2023	DRAFT 4	NSW Medicines Formulary reviewed. Reviewed by nursing and pharmacy staff.
September 2023	4	Approved by SESLHD Drug and Therapeutics Committee