

Chronic Idiopathic Constipation

Pharmacological management: fiber, osmotic and stimulant laxatives, secretagogues, and 5-HT4 agonist therapy.

2023 AGA-ACG Clinical Practice Guideline
Pharmacological Management of Chronic Idiopathic Constipation
Chang et al. • Am J Gastroenterol 2023;118:936-954

GRADE Strong Rec Conditional Rec

1 Fiber & Osmotic Laxatives

STATEMENT	STRENGTH	EVIDENCE
Fiber supplementation (psyllium — best evidence) over management without fiber	Conditional	Low
PEG over management without PEG	Strong	Moderate
Magnesium oxide over management without MgO	Conditional	Very Low
Lactulose over management without lactulose (2nd-line if OTC agents fail/not tolerated)	Conditional	Very Low

2 Stimulant Laxatives

STATEMENT	STRENGTH	EVIDENCE
Bisacodyl or sodium picosulphate, short-term (≤4 wk) or as rescue therapy, over management without	Strong	Moderate
Senna over management without senna	Conditional	Low

KEY Stimulant laxatives are a good option for **occasional use or rescue therapy**, combined with other CIC agents. Most common side effects: abdominal pain, cramping, diarrhea — start low, increase as tolerated.

3 Secretagogues & 5-HT4 Agonist — For OTC-Refractory CIC

STATEMENT	STRENGTH	EVIDENCE
Lubiprostone over management without lubiprostone	Conditional	Low
Linacotide over management without linacotide	Strong	Moderate
Plecanatide over management without plecanatide	Strong	Moderate
Prucalopride over management without prucalopride	Strong	Moderate

4 Dosing & Cost Reference

AGENT	CLASS	INITIAL DOSE	MAX DOSE	MONTHLY COST	NOTES
Fiber (psyllium)	Bulk-forming	Titrate to 20–30 g/d total intake	No benefit >25–30 g	<\$50	Ensure adequate hydration; bloating common
PEG	Osmotic	17 g daily	No clear max	\$10–45	Bloating, cramping; effect durable over 6 mo
Magnesium oxide	Osmotic	400–500 mg daily	No clear max (studies to 1,000–1,500 mg)	<\$50	Caution in renal insufficiency
Lactulose	Osmotic	15 g daily	No clear max	<\$50	Only osmotic studied in pregnancy; watch Na ⁺ /K ⁺
Bisacodyl	Stimulant	5 mg daily	10 mg daily	<\$50	Short-term/rescue use; long-term safety unknown
Senna	Stimulant	8.6–17.2 mg daily	No clear max (~4 tabs BID)	<\$50	Also present in laxative teas
Lubiprostone	CIC-2 secretagogue	24 mcg BID	24 mcg BID	\$374	Also approved IBS-C at 8 mcg BID
Linacotide	GC-C secretagogue	72–145 mcg daily	290 mcg daily	\$523	Diarrhea may limit use; also approved IBS-C
Plecanatide	GC-C secretagogue	3 mg daily	3 mg daily	\$526	Also approved for IBS-C
Prucalopride	5-HT4 agonist	1–2 mg daily	2 mg daily	\$563	Headache/diarrhea may limit use