

POLICY STATEMENT

The Registered Nurse (RN) / Registered Midwife (RM) 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.

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 exceeded¹

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 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 with stimulant for constipation, especially opioid induced, in patients over 12 years of age

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Abdominal cramps

Colic

Nausea, vomiting or other symptoms of appendicitis

Undiagnosed rectal bleeding

Intestinal obstruction

Abdominal pain of unknown cause

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

PRECAUTIONS

Congestive heart failure or hypertension (due to the sodium content).

Inflammatory bowel disease.

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

NURSE/MIDWIFE INITIATED MEDICINE PROTOCOL

**Docosate 50mg and Sennosides 8mg
for constipation (Coloxyl with Senna®)**

SESLHDPR/452

- 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

PROTOCOL/ADMINISTRATION GUIDELINES

Caution: CHECK for allergies and/or contraindications			
Drug	Dose	Route	Frequency
Docosate 50mg and sennosides 8mg	1 to 2 tablets	Oral	Once
Give with plenty of fluid away from other medications			

MONITORING - POTENTIAL ADVERSE EFFECTS/INTERACTIONS

Monitor bowel function and complete stool chart

Adverse effects: Abdominal discomfort, such as colic or cramps

Senna laxatives discolour the urine (yellowish brown or red) and may interfere with diagnostic tests.

Absorption of other medicines may be affected – avoid co-administration

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
- 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](#). Laxatives. South Australia: Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd, January 2023.
3. [eTG complete](#). Functional constipation in adults. Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd. August 2022.

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. 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