Table 4

Medications for the management of constipation [4]

Laxatives	Recommended doses
Macrogols	**Disimpaction:**
Polyethylene glycol (PEG) 3350 and electrolytes Paediatric formula contains 6.562 g of macrogol 3350 (unflavoured) Each sachet of Movicol Paediatric Plain can be mixed with 62.5 ml of fluid	**Age <1 year** ½ - 1 sachet day (non-BNFC recommended dose) **1 – 5 years** Day 1: 2 sachets Days 2 - 3: 4 sachets for 2 days Days 4 - 5 : 6 sachets for 2 days Days 6+: 8 sachets daily (non-BNFC) **5 – 12 years** 4 sachets on day 1 then increased in steps of 2 sachets/day to maximum 12 sachets/day (non-BNFC)
	Ongoing maintenance
	Age < 1 year ½ - 1 sachet/day (non-BNFC) **1 – 6 years** 1 sachet/day adjust dose to produce soft stools maximum 4 sachets/day (non-BNFC for children under 2) **6 – 12 years** 2 sachets daily adjust to produce regular soft stools (maximum 4 sachets/day)
Adult formula can be used for those > 12 1 sachet contains 13.125 g of macrogol 3350	**Disimpaction:** **Age 12-18 years** 4 sachets on day 1 increased to maximum of 8 sachets daily (non-BNFC) **Ongoing maintenance:** **12-18 years** 1 - 3 sachets/day adjust according to response
Osmotic laxatives	
Lactulose	**Age 1 month to 1 year:** 2.5 ml bd, adjusted according to response **1–5 years:** 2.5–10 ml bd, adjusted according to response (non-BNFC) **5–18 years:** 5–20 ml bd, adjusted according to response (non-BNFC)
Stimulant laxatives	
Sodium picosulfate	(Non-BNFC) **Age 1 month to 4 years:** 2.5–10 mg od **4–18 years:** 2.5–20 mg od
Bisacodyl	(Non-BNFC) By mouth **Age 4–18 years:** 5–20 mg od By rectum (suppository) **2–18 years:** 5–10 mg od
Senna	Senna syrup (7.5 mg/5 ml) **Age 1 month to 4 years:** 2.5–10 ml od **4–18 years:** 2.5–20 ml od
	Senna (non-proprietary) (1 tablet = 7.5 mg) **Age 2–4 years:** ½–2 tablets od **4–6 years:** ½–4 tablets od **6–18 years:** 1–4 tablets od
Docusate sodium	**Age 6 months–2 years:** 12.5 mg td (use paediatric oral solution) **2–12 years:** 12.5–25 mg td (use paediatric oral solution) **12–18 years:** up to 500 mg daily in divided doses

One of the big issues in the pharmacological management of idiopathic constipation in children is that the BNFC recommended dose of medication is often far less than the dose that one needs to use in practice to be effective. Hence one is often forced to prescribe off licence to treat these children effectively.

Adapted from NICE CG 99. The diagnosis and management of idiopathic childhood constipation in primary and secondary care