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Milk of Magnesia

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Milk of magnesia was made by Charles Henry Philips in 1880. It is now used medicinally as an oral antacid or as a laxative. The official name is [magnesium](#) hydroxide or Mg(OH)₂. It is so named because it appears milky white and has the naturally mineral magnesium. Milk of magnesia works within four to six hours of a dose and temporarily relieves constipation in children and adults.

Milk of magnesia is an alkaline suspension, meaning that it will cause neutralization when it encounters anything acidic. This is why it makes an excellent antacid, as it neutralizes excess stomach acid (hydrochloric acid (HCL) when swallowed. Left untreated, excess stomach acid will cause heartburn, indigestion and stomach ulcers. Milk of magnesia used as an antacid works when the hydroxide ions combine with the [hydrogen](#) ions in HCL to reduce the excess activity in the stomach.

When used as a laxative, milk of magnesia helps to flush the intestines by stimulating intestinal motility. The magnesium ions pull water from the surrounding body tissues via osmosis. The extra water in the intestines softens and increases the amount of feces, which in turn stimulates the nerves in the intestines. The ions also release the hormone cholecystokinin, causing an increase of water and electrolytes in the intestine and causing intestinal motility.

Side effects of taking Milk of Magnesia include

- Nausea
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

Serious side effects indicating an overdose of Milk of Magnesia include:

- Low blood pressure
- Drowsiness
- Coma

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Milk of magnesia should not be taken for more than one week. Persons with chronic kidney disease are asked to avoid overconsumption of milk of magnesia. Because the kidney functions to excrete magnesium, taking too much would tire out the kidneys and cause magnesium toxicity of the blood.

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Milk of magnesia products are available in chewable tablets, capsules, and liquid forms, in a variety of flavors. It is recommended that milk of magnesia be taken with a full [glass](#) of juice or water to help with absorption.

Do not use milk of magnesia if you experience

abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting. Rectal bleeding or failure to have a bowel movement after use of a laxative may be an indication of a more serious problem.

The effects of milk of magnesia on an unborn baby are unknown. It is therefore recommended that you consult a physician before taking it if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. It is also not known whether milk of magnesia will harm a nursing baby. Nursing mothers should also consult their physicians before use.

Milk of magnesia should be stored at room temperature and kept away from heat and moisture

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