polycarbophil (pol-i-kar-boe-fil)
Bulk Forming Fiber Laxative, Equalactin, FiberCon, Fiber-Lax, Konsyl Fiber, Mitrolan

**Classification**
Therapeutic: antidiarrheals, laxatives
Pharmacologic: bulk-forming agents

**Pregnancy Category** UK

**Indications**
Treatment of constipation or diarrhea that may be associated with diverticulosis or irritable bowel syndrome.

**Action**
Acts as a bulk laxative by keeping water within the bowel lumen. Acts as an antidiarrheal by taking on water within the bowel lumen to create a formed stool. Therapeutic Effects: Normalization of bowel water content while adding bulk, treating both diarrhea and constipation.

**Pharmacokinetics**
Absorption: Minimal systemic absorption.
Distribution: Unknown.
Metabolism and Excretion: Complex plus absorbed water are excreted in the feces.
Half-life: Unknown.

**TIME/ACTION PROFILE (effect on bowel function)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUTE</th>
<th>ONSET</th>
<th>PEAK</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>12–24 hr</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Contraindications/Precautions**
Contraindicated in: Hypersensitivity; Abdominal pain; Nausea or vomiting (especially when associated with fever or other signs of acute abdomen); Severe intra-abdominal adhesions; Dysphagia.

+ = General Implication
- = Discontinued

**Use Cautiously in:** Pregnancy or lactation (has been used safely).

**Adverse Reactions/Side Effects**
GI: abdominal fullness.

**Interactions**
Drug-Drug: May decrease the absorption of concurrently administered tetracycline.

**Route/Dosage**
PO (Adults): 1 g 1–4 times daily or as needed (not to exceed 6 g/24 hr); for severe diarrhea, may repeat q 30 min.
PO (Children 2–12 yr): 500 mg 1–3 times daily or as needed (not to exceed 3 g/24 hr); for severe diarrhea, may repeat q 30 min.
PO (Children 2–6 yr): 500 mg 1–2 times daily or as needed (not to exceed 1.5 g/24 hr); for severe diarrhea, may repeat q 30 min.

**NURSING IMPLICATIONS**

**Assessment**
- Assess for fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal distention, and pain. Notify health care professional if present. Auscultate bowel sounds. Inquire about patient's usual diet, fluid intake, activity level, and bowel function.
- Monitor for color, consistency, and amount of stool produced.
- Diarrhea: Monitor for signs of dehydration (decreased skin turgor, dry mucous membranes, weight loss, decreased urine output, tachycardia, and hypotension).

**Potential Nursing Diagnoses**
Constipation (Indications)
Diarrhea (Indications)
Deficient knowledge, related to medication regimen (Patient/Family Teaching)

**Implementation**
- Administer 1 hr before or 2 hr after tetracycline.
- Diarrhea: For treatment of severe diarrhea, dose may be repeated every 30 min. Do not exceed total daily prescribed dose.
- Chewable tablets consume up to 60 times their weight in water.
- Constipation: For treatment of constipation, administer with 8 oz of water or juice.

**Patient/Family Teaching**
- Pregnancy/lactation: Consult health care professional prior to use.

**Classspecific Considerations**
- Antidiarrheals: Antimotility agents.
- Laxatives: Bulk-forming agents. Increase fiber intake in diet and increase fluid intake. Use a bran-contained fiber supplement instead of polycarbophil if side effects are severe.
Patient/Family Teaching

- Encourage patients with constipation to use other forms of bowel regulation, such as increasing bulk in diet, fluid intake, and mobility. Normal bowel habits are individualized and can vary from 3 times/day to 3 times/wk.
- Instruct patients with sudden onset of constipation to notify health care professional; medical evaluation may be necessary.
- Instruct patients with diarrhea to notify health care professional if fever or bloody stools occur or if diarrhea persists or worsens. Discuss need for fluids and diet modifications during episodes of diarrhea.

Evaluation/Desired Outcomes

- Soft, formed bowel movement. May require 3 days for therapeutic effect to occur.

Why was this drug prescribed for your patient?