

Tips for Managing Constipation

Things you can do on your own



Keep track of your constipation:

- Write down when you have bowel movements
- Notice and write down any relationship between your diet and bowel movements

Stay hydrated:

- Drink 6-8 cups of liquids, such as water, per day
- Drink hot liquids (like water with lemon)
- Drink prune juice or senna tea

Stay active and make changes to reduce your symptoms:

- Put your feet on a footstool when sitting on the toilet
- Do light exercise (like walking)
- Talk to your team about what foods you should eat or avoid:
 - For some people increasing fiber can help. For others, it does not help. Check with your team first.
- Be aware of medications you take that may cause constipation, including:
 - Anti-nausea medicines: Ondansetron (Zofran) or Granisetron (Kytril)
 - Opioid pain medications (like oxycodone or morphine)
- If you are taking pain medications that contain opiates (like oxycodone and morphine), you should be taking laxatives like senna or polyethylene glycol (Miralax), unless your care team has told you not to

Understand what might be causing constipation:

- Use of some medications, particularly opioids, can lead to moderate or severe constipation. Your care team may recommend laxatives.
- A change in diet or medications can lead to constipation
- Constipation can occasionally be an early sign that your bowels are not working well (ileus or bowel obstruction)

See the Other Resources page for more information

With over-the-counter medications



- Most patients with at least moderate constipation should use medication – it is effective. If your constipation is moderate (constipation that causes discomfort), buy an over-the counter laxative at your local drug store and take it as directed on the box
 - Colace
 - Senna (like Senakot® or “Smooth Moves” tea)
 - Bisacodyl (like Dulcolax®)
 - Polyethylene glycol (i.e. MiraLAX®)
- Do not take fiber supplements (like Metamucil®) without checking with your care team
- If your blood counts are normal, you may consider trying a suppository or enema such as:
 - Suppositories: Glycerin or Bisacodyl (Dulcolax)
 - Enemas: saline, mineral oil, or phosphate

REMINDER - Always keep your care team updated about over-the-counter medicines you are taking. If your care team tells you they are not safe for you, do not take them.

When to call your care team for help



- If after trying these tips, your constipation stays the same or gets worse
- If there is new blood in your stool, or the blood is becoming more frequent
- If you are unable to pass gas for a day or more
- If your abdomen (belly area) is swollen and feels hard
- If you have worsening abdominal (belly area) pain
- If you think you have a large amount of stool stuck in your rectum
- If you develop nausea and vomiting in addition to constipation

Additional information on Constipation



- [Click here](#) for more information about stool changes

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