



Constipation Management

Constipation is a common problem experienced by many patients and can be caused by chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, stress or medications. Please do not be afraid or embarrassed to call your doctor or nurse at any time. If left untreated, the constipation may get worse. Many chemotherapy and anti-nausea medications contribute to constipation as well as opiate pain medication. Constipation is based on the frequency of bowel movement that is normal for you.

Please call our office if constipation does not improve within 24-48 hours of the following measures.

To PREVENT constipation or to soften hard stool

- Exercise – Walking even 5-15 minutes once or twice a day can help the bowels start moving. Even slow walking will help, especially after meals.
- Fluids – Dehydration worsens constipation. Regular fluid intake helps the bowels start moving. Try to drink at least 2 liters of fluid daily.
- Prunes or prune juice - *6 prunes per day or 6 oz of prune juice twice daily*

***Fiber supplements such as Metamucil or Citrucel should be avoided in advanced cancer as these may worsen constipation if you can't take in the recommended fluids.*

To MANAGE constipation

- **To SOFTEN stool (Mush)** – May use ONE of the following:
 - Polyethylene glycol (Miralax, over the counter) – 1 scoop or capful (17 grams) in juice daily. May increase to twice daily. Works best when taken regularly.
 - Lactulose (Prescription) – 30 mL (2 tablespoons) one to four times daily
 - *Docusate (Colace, over the counter) – 100mg or 250mg once or twice daily. May increase to 500mg twice daily.*
- **To MOVE stool (Push)** – May use ONE Of the following:
 - *Senna 8.6 mg (over the counter) – 1-2 tabs at bedtime. May increase to 2-4 tabs twice daily*

- *Senna-S 8.6mg/50mg (Senna + Docusate 50mg, over the counter) – 1-2 tabs at bedtime. May increase to 2-4 tabs twice daily.*
- *Senna Tea (Smooth Move or other brands, over the counter) – 1 cup of tea once to twice daily*
- *Bisacodyl (Dulcolax, over the counter) 5mg – 1-2 tabs at bedtime. May increase to 2-3 tabs twice daily.*

- **Natural Remedies:**

- Prunes – 6 prunes per day or 6 oz of prune juice twice daily
- Drink a warm-to-hot decaffeinated drink about 30 minutes before the time you usually have a bowel movement.
- Yakima Fruit paste – 1-2 tablespoons twice daily.
 - 2 cups Senna tea using “Smooth Move” tea bags or loose Senna leaves and strain.
 - 1 pound each of prunes, raisins and figs.
 - 1 cup brown sugar, or use a sugar substitute
 - 1 cup lemon juice
 - Prepare the tea in a large pot.
 - Add prunes, raisins and figs.
 - Boil tea and fruit for 5 minutes.
 - Remove from heat, add sugar and lemon juice. Allow to cool.
 - Using a hand mixer or food processor, blend into a smooth paste.
 - Place in a plastic container and put in the freezer. The paste will be the consistency of peanut butter when it’s frozen.
 - Spoon out and eat 1-2 tablespoons twice a day. Can eat off the spoon or spread on toast or add to hot water.

For PERSISTENT or SEVERE constipation, in addition to the daily regimen described above, you may try:

- Milk of Magnesia: 1-2 tablespoons 2-4 times per day. Do not take for more than two days without calling our office.

- *Magnesium Citrate: Take ½ to 1 bottle. Repeat if no bowel movements within 12 hours. Do not take more than two bottles.*

*** Please call our office before using Bisacodyl (Dulcolax) 10mg Suppository or Fleets Enema.*