

Constipation

Just the Facts

It is common for a person with cancer to develop constipation, especially when opioids (narcotics) are being used. Bowel movements can become infrequent, hard and small in volume. It is important to avoid letting this become a problem.

Constipation can develop because of inactivity, some pain medications, changes in the body, lack of fluids/ fiber and depression. Excessive use of laxatives can result in the colon being less sensitive to its intrinsic reflexes, so always discuss use of laxatives with your nurse and doctor.

Your Goals:

- ✓ Prevent constipation and recognize symptoms early.
- ✓ Get professional help when needed.

Important Signs and Symptoms:

Report symptoms to doctor or nurse during clinic hours today.

- ☐ Distended abdomen and or abdominal pain.
- ☐ No bowel movement for more than 2 –3 days.
- ☐ Dizziness and or confusion.
- ☐ Back pain.
- ☐ Leaking stool.
- ☐ Fever.
- ☐ No bowel movements with nausea and vomiting.

What You Can Do At Home:

Preventing Constipation.

- ➡ Drink plenty of fluid. Try to drink at least 8 cups of liquid daily. Drinking hot water upon rising in the morning can stimulate the bowels.
- ➡ Eat food high in fiber when possible. Fiber includes: fruits, figs, dates, prunes or prune juice, vegetables, and grains. Ask your nurse if you would like consultation with the dietician.
- ➡ If you are taking pain medication ask your doctor or nurse about the use of laxatives and stool softeners.
- ➡ Keep physically active as possible.

Ask your nurse and or doctor if you need a laxative.