

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 fluids, 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 care team about what foods you should eat or avoid.
- Be aware of medicines you take that may cause constipation, including:
 - Anti-nausea medicines like ondansetron (Zofran) or granisetron (Kytril)
 - Opioid pain medicines like oxycodone or morphine

Understand what might be causing constipation.

- Use of some medicines like opioids
- A change in diet or medicines
- Constipation can sometimes be an early sign that your bowels are not working well (bowel blockage or obstruction).



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) constipation medications.

- OTC constipation medications work for mild to moderate constipation. You can buy these medications at your local drugstore. Take as directed on the package. Examples include:
 - Peri-Colace
 - Senna (like Senokot or Smooth Move tea)
 - Bisacodyl (like Dulcolax)
 - Polyethylene glycol (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 (like glycerin or bisacodyl) or an enema (like saline, mineral oil, or phosphate).



When to call your care team for help

- If after trying these tips, your constipation stays the same or gets worse
- If there is blood in your stool, or the blood is becoming more often
- If you are unable to pass gas for a day or more
- If your belly area is swollen and feels hard
- If you have worsening belly 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



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/constipation or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.