

Constipation

Constipation is a decrease in the number of bowel movements and abnormal hardening of stool. This makes passing of stool difficult and sometimes painful.

Call your healthcare team if you have constipation.

Signs and symptoms

- No bowel movement for three or more days
- Feeling of rectal or abdominal fullness, pressure, or pain
- Difficult or painful passing of stool that is hard, dry, or small in volume
- Back pain
- Decreased appetite
- Nausea
- Occasionally, constipation can be a sign of bowel obstruction. Bowel obstruction can be accompanied by constipation, a hard, tender, or bloated abdomen, abdominal pain, and/or nausea and vomiting.
 - This can be a medical emergency if not treated by your healthcare team. If you experience these symptoms together, call your healthcare team immediately, or go to an Emergency Room.

Things to do

- Establish a regular time for moving your bowels by going to the bathroom at the same time every day
- Drink warm fluids with meals
- Eat the skin on fruits and vegetables unless otherwise directed by your healthcare team
- Increase fiber in your diet, such as: fruits, vegetables, beans, barley, brown rice, nuts, seeds and whole-grain products, such as: breads, cereals and pastas
- Drink at least six to eight glasses of fluid daily including prune juice, tea, or hot lemon water
- Increase moderate daily exercise such as walking for at least 30 minutes a day
- Add unprocessed wheat bran (6-12 teaspoons) to foods such as cereals, homemade breads, and casseroles
- Use stool softeners/laxatives as directed by your healthcare team

Things to avoid

- Foods that are greasy or fried
- Drinks with caffeine
- Alcohol
- Excessive amounts of milk and cheese
- Excessive use of laxatives
- Check with your healthcare team before using enemas or suppositories
- Straining or holding your breath for long periods of time when passing stool

If you have any questions or concerns, call your healthcare team at 732-235-2465.

If you are having problems during business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), please call 732-235-2465 and the operator will direct your call. If it is after business hours, on a holiday or weekend, please call the same number and our answering service will assist you.