Constipation

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

What is constipation? Constipation is when you have hard, dry bowel movements, or you go longer than usual between bowel movements.

What causes constipation?

- Not enough water or high-fiber foods
- Lack of physical activity
- Medicine used to treat pain, depression, or high blood pressure
- Medical conditions, such as hemorrhoids, diabetes, or a stroke

What are the signs and symptoms of constipation?

- Difficulty pushing out your bowel movement
- Pain or bleeding during your bowel movement
- A feeling that you did not finish having your bowel movement
- Nausea
- Bloating
- Headache

How is constipation treated? Medicine or a fiber supplement may help make your bowel movement softer. A laxative may help relax and loosen your intestines to help you have a bowel movement. You may also be given medicine to increase fluid in your intestines. The fluid may help move bowel movements through your intestines.

How can I manage my symptoms?

- Drink liquids as directed. You may need to drink extra liquids to help soften and move your bowels. Ask how much liquid to drink each day and which liquids are best for you.

- Eat high-fiber foods. This may help decrease constipation by adding bulk to your bowel movements. High-fiber foods include fruit, vegetables, whole-grain breads and cereals, and beans. Your healthcare provider or dietitian can help you create a high-fiber meal plan.
• **Exercise regularly.** Regular physical activity can help stimulate your intestines. Ask which exercises are best for you.

• **Schedule a time each day to have a bowel movement.** This may help train your body to have regular bowel movements. Bend forward while you are on the toilet to help move the bowel movement out. Sit on the toilet for at least 10 minutes, even if you do not have a bowel movement.

**When should I seek immediate care?**

• You have blood in your bowel movements.

• You have a fever and abdominal pain with constipation.

**When should I contact my healthcare provider?**

• Your constipation gets worse.

• You start to vomit.

• You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

**CARE AGREEMENT:**

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your caregivers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

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