

Managing Constipation



Constipation occurs in 40-70% of cancer patients and is due to a number of reasons. Preventing constipation is usually easier than treating constipation.

Ways to try to prevent constipation:

- Take Miralax 17g 1-2 times daily; OR
- Take Docusate (stool softener) for example docusate – up to 2 tablets 3 times a day (the store brand or generic is OK); OR
- Take Docusate and Senna (laxative and stool softener together) – start with 2 tablets at bedtime; may take up to 8 tablets in 24 hours if needed
- Drink more water (goal is 6 to 8 eight ounce glasses of water daily)
- Eat more fiber – bran, broccoli, cabbage, raspberries, leafy green vegetables, celery, squash, beans, oranges and mushrooms
- Get up and move, walking will help get your bowels moving

Ways to treat constipation (If you do not have a bowel movement in 2 days, continue your prevention medications from above):

1. **Milk of Magnesia (laxative)**
30-60ml 1-2 times daily
2. **Other Laxatives**
Bisacodyl: 5-15mg once a day – you may also use the suppository if your provider says it is OK
Senokot: 2 tablets twice a day, may take up to 2 tablets four times a day
Senokot-XTRA: 1 tablet once a day, may take up to 2 tablets twice a day
3. **Magnesium Citrate**
½ - 1 bottle, you can repeat (take the rest of the bottle) if no results

There are stronger medications that can be used, if you have tried the suggestions above and are still not able to have a bowel movement, call your Nurse Case Manager.