

Caregiver Care Guide: *Constipation*

What is Constipation?

- Bowel movements occurring less often than usual established bowel pattern
- Hard stool that may be difficult to pass
- Increased difficulty moving bowels
- Potential causes: medications, decreased activity, decreased intake, diets low in fiber, disease process

What are some Symptoms of Constipation?

- Bowel movement less frequently than normal
- Any change in the frequency or consistency (e.g., liquid, pebbles) of bowel movements
- Pain, cramping, tenderness
- A feeling of fullness or bloating
- Blood in stools
- Diarrhea or oozing stools
- Nausea and/or vomiting

What can be done to Manage Constipation?

- Record when bowel movements occur
- Follow a regular bowel regimen, even if not constipated; many medications can cause constipation
- Establish routine times for toileting
- Drink as much fluid as is comfortable; warm liquids may promote bowel movement (Fluids are found in liquids, juices, soups, fruits, vegetables, and frozen treats)
- Try to drink 6-8 cups daily
- Eat more fruits and fruit juices, including dried fruits.
- Try to sit upright and avoid lying too much in bed
- Increase physical activity if possible; walking can be beneficial
- Take laxatives/stool softeners as ordered by the care team
- Sit upright on the toilet, commode or bedpan
- Avoid bulk laxatives as determined by the care team if not drinking enough fluids

What are some of the Side Effects of Treating Constipation?

Bloating · Diarrhea · Cramping · Rectal Irritation · Gas · Thirst · Nausea

If Constipation is not managed or medication side effects do not improve, notify the hospice team.