

Constipation



What is constipation?

Constipation occurs when bowel movements become less frequent and stools become dry, hard, and difficult to pass. Comfort in having BMs is more important to consider than frequency of BMs. There are several reasons a patient might develop constipation: Diet changes, especially decreased oral intake, opioid medications, age, inactivity, and disease state.

Signs and Symptoms

- Less frequent stool
- Bloating/swelling of abdomen
- Dry hard stool
- Nausea/vomiting/cramping
- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Reflux/heartburn
- Any of the above symptoms with small smeary or liquid stools

Management

- Record your bowel movements
- Try to drink at least 8 glasses of fluid/day
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables which are natural fibers
- Exercise if you're able
- Walking or sitting upright after meals aids in digestion
- Try to establish a routine time to use the toilet
- Do not fight the urge or wait to go
- Follow a bowel regimen of stool softeners/laxatives as directed

If you need help with your symptoms, call VNA 24hrs a day:

214-689-0000

Treatment

- Stool softeners _____
- Laxatives _____
- Increased fluids _____
- High fiber diet _____
- Probiotics _____

What should I communicate to the hospice/palliative care team?

- No bowel movement in 3 days, or change in frequency
- Abdominal symptoms (cramping, nausea, vomiting, bloating/gas, distention, reflux)
- Medication changes
- Change in stool consistency (diarrhea/oozing stools, hard, small)
- Difficulty passing stool
- Hemorrhoids or rectal bleeding
- Decreased appetite or ability to consume fair amount of fluids

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