

Constipation

Constipation can be a common side effect while undergoing treatment for cancer. It can be caused by dehydration, medications and anticancer therapies.

Tips for managing constipation:

- Aim for 64oz/8cups of non-caffeinated beverages, preferably water per day.
- Make sure you are consuming fiber via fruits/vegetables and whole grains, the goal is for at least 25g of fiber daily
- Light activity and/or stretching; consider walking around your home or outside as you are able.
- If you are having bowel movement less than once every 3 days, it is time to evaluate your bowel regimen and try:
 - Stool softner (docusate sodium or colace) and/or
 - MiraLax or Milk of Magnesia
- If this does not produce a bowel movement try:
 - Enema
 - Suppository
 - Senocot or Magnesium Citrate liquid
- You may need to use a combination of laxatives, stool softners and enema/suppositories daily to have regular bowel movements.
- Pain medications and nausea medications can be very constipating.

If it has been more than 5 days and you have tried all of the above recommendations, please notify your health care team.

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Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be a common side effect during cancer treatment. Following a special diet can help control diarrhea better.

Foods not recommended when having diarrhea are:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain bread and cereals
- Caffeine in coffee, pop and tea
- Alcohol
- High fat dairy products

Foods that are recommended:

- Well cooked vegetables, canned fruits in light syrup
- White bread and cereals like: Cheerios, rice crispies, corn flakes
- Water, decaf coffee and teas
- Low fat dairy (1% or Skim)

If you continue to have diarrhea (4-5 loose bowel movements) you may take Imodium.

How to take Imodium:

- Start taking a ½ tab to a full tab in the morning. Repeat with a ½ tab after each bowel movement.
- If you are continuing to have diarrhea after making diet changes and taking Imodium, please check in with nursing.
- Do not take more than 8 full tabs of Imodium per day.
- If you are taking Imodium and continue to have loose stools, please notify your health care team.

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Nausea and Vomiting

There are many reasons for nausea and vomiting during cancer treatment, chemotherapy, radiation to the stomach or near the stomach, and medications. Talk to your care team if you are experiencing nausea and vomiting.

Important tips for managing nausea:

- Avoid strong odor perfumes, cooking food, and air freshers. Foods that are cold or room temperature have less smell.
- Stay hydrated by sucking on ice chips and taking small sips of water
- Take your nausea medication as prescribed and rotate medications so you have consistent coverage throughout the day and night.
- For example, if you have two nausea medications:
Nausea medication A: prescription directions, take one pill every 6 hrs; Nausea medication B: prescription directions, rub gel on wrist every 6 hrs; Take medication A at 8 am, 3 hours later at 11 am take medication B, at 2 pm take medication A again, at 5 pm take medication B again, etc.
 - Your nurse or pharmacist can help with a schedule
 - Nausea medication may need to be used for many days in a row following a dose of chemo.
 - Nausea medications can be constipating. If you have not had a bowel movement for 3 days you should use a laxative and talk to your health care team.
- “Natural” Nausea-relief strategies:
 - Taking 0.5 to 1 gram ginger extract along with prescribed anti-nausea medications
 - Using Sea-Bands acupressure bracelets
 - Relaxation techniques like meditation or mindfulness

If you have followed these tips and continue to have nausea please speak with your health care team. Our goal is to prevent nausea and vomiting.

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