



Volume 8 – Late Summer 2020

“The Beat”

Announcement

Join us in welcoming Hilary Knowles, CNA. She has joined our team from Winchester Cardiology and Vascular Medicine | Valley Health.

Constipation

How do you know if you have it?

Traditionally, constipation is summarized as infrequent bowel movements or hard stools. There may also be other symptoms, such as straining or a sensation of incomplete emptying. Fewer than 3 spontaneous bowel movements per week is considered constipation.

What medications can cause constipation?

Many prescription medications can cause constipation as a side effect. Some of the most likely culprits are listed below.

- * Opioid pain relievers (hydrocodone, morphine, oxycodone, tramadol)
- * Antihistamines (hydroxyzine, loratadine, diphenhydramine)
- * Urinary incontinence drugs (oxybutynin, darifenacin, mirabegron)
- * Iron supplements (ferrous sulfate)
- * Certain heart medications (amlodipine, diltiazem, verapamil, propranolol, atenolol)
- * Certain antidepressants (amitriptyline, imipramine)

What can you do?

As we always say, prevention is the key!

The following can help you avoid developing chronic constipation.

- * Include plenty of high-fiber foods, such as beans, apples, prunes, peas, oats, bran or whole grain cereals.
- * If you are not able to eat enough fiber in your diet, you can add fiber supplements, which include Metamucil (psyllium) or FiberCon (calcium polycarbophil) or Citrucel (methylcellulose). You can also incorporate a probiotic like Colon Health.
- * Avoid processed foods, and dairy and meat products.
- * Remember to drink fluids up to your fluid restriction.
- * Stay as active as possible and try to get regular exercise. Walking regularly can help improve your bowel movements.
- * Try to manage stress.

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- * Don't ignore the urge to pass stool.
- * Try to create a regular schedule for bowel movements, especially after a meal.
- * Remember to sleep 8 hours per night.

If you still experience hard stools, most medications that help soften stool or reduce constipation symptoms are available over the counter. If you are experiencing pain in your stomach or pain with your bowel movement, please call your primary care provider.

Avoid: Fleets phospho soda and Fleets enema due to high content of sodium. Castor or mineral oil. If you have problems with your kidneys [chronic kidney disease (CKD) or renal failure], avoid milk of magnesia (MOM) and magnesium citrate.

Try these over the counter medications:

1. If you are experiencing hard stools, you can always try adding prune juice or prunes to your regiment. If you are drinking juice, it should be included in your fluid restriction. If no improvement, start with Colace (docusate sodium) 100 mg – take 1 tablet every morning and 1 tablet every evening. You can safely take 2 tablets every morning and 2 tablets every night of this medication. This medication is only a stool softener. It is not a laxative and should not cause stomach cramps.
2. If you do not have any relief, start Miralax (polyethylene glycol) at the recommended doses on the label. This medication comes in powder form and is mixed with a small amount of water or other fluid. It causes the intestines to hold on to more fluid, which will soften stools and should also increase the frequency of bowel movements. It is also safe for people with kidney disease. It may cause some bloating and cramps, but this is less common when used at regular doses. Fun fact: Large doses of polyethylene glycol (PEG) are used for bowel preparation prior to colonoscopy.
3. Senokot or Exlax (sennosides) OR correctol or dulcolax (bisacodyl). These medications force the bowel muscles to squeeze or contract to move stool out. Please follow the package directions. These medications can cause stomach cramps. Do not take these products any longer than 7 days.

If you do not see results from these tips, please see your primary care provider.

Resources:

Portalatin M, Winstead N. Medical management of constipation. *Clin Colon Rectal Surg.* 2012;25(1):12-19. doi:10.1055/s-0032-1301754

Prichard DO, Bharucha AE. Recent advances in understanding and managing chronic constipation. *F1000Res.* 2018;7:F1000 Faculty Rev-1640. Published 2018 Oct 15. doi:10.12688/f1000research.15900.1

<https://familydoctor.org/laxatives-otc-products-for-constipation/>

Recipe

Please take a look at the following website for some new recipes:

<https://www.drgourmet.com/specialdiets/lowsodium/recipes.shtml>

(We ran out of room for a recipe to be printed in this newsletter.)

Call the Heart Failure Clinic if you have questions.

540-536-4555

