



CANCER
INFAMILY
— build knowledge



CONSTIPATION

This leaflet discusses constipation, a potential side effect of chemotherapy. Ask your doctor if you are at risk of it from your treatment(s).

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLETS DO NOT REPLACE THE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND SUPPORT PROVIDED BY YOUR DOCTOR.

Constipation

Some people become constipated during chemotherapy. This means that they have infrequent bowel movements or hard stools difficult to pass.

Constipation is a common effect of painkillers (especially opioids, for example codeine) or anti-nausea medications. Some chemicals used in chemotherapy may also cause constipation. Sometimes, however, the reason could simply be a change of habits, for example less physical activity, less appetite or a change in diet.

Always report constipation your doctor. You may need a laxative or something to soften stools, but do not do anything without consulting your doctor (especially if you have a low neutrophil count).



Constipation relief



- ✘ Exercise. A simple walk can help, as a workout routine (be sure to check with your doctor before increasing your physical activity).
- ✘ Stay active. This helps the bowel to function.
- ✘ Go to the bathroom at the same time every day. Your body will adapt to this schedule.
- ✘ If you feel like going, do not hold it. Try to use the restroom 5 - 15 minutes after meals. Gut movements are higher right after breakfast; take advantage of that to go.
- ✘ Drink plenty of fluids to help keep your stool soft. Warm or hot liquids work better.

- ✘ Avoid caffeinated beverages. Caffeine is diuretic, meaning that increases fluid loss.
- ✘ Gradually increase the consumption of fiber-rich foods (e.g. bread and whole grains, brown rice, beans, fresh or cooked vegetables, fresh or dried fruits or nuts).

Contact your doctor or nurse if:

- ✘ If it has been more than three days since your last bowel movement.
- ✘ Your stools are hard or difficult to pass for more than three days.





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