

Constipation is when you or your loved one has trouble emptying the bowels. This can be extremely uncomfortable and even painful if left untreated.

- Factors that may cause constipation include:
  - Diet changes (eating and drinking less)
  - Medications such as opioids (examples: morphine, hydromorphone)
  - Diseases such as diabetes, hypothyroidism, and kidney dysfunction
  - Inflammation of the colon and irritable bowel syndrome
- Ways to prevent and treat constipation include:
  - Drink more fluids (enough to keep urine clear or pale yellow) and eat more fiber (fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans), as able
  - Exercise or keep physically active, as able
  - Schedule toilet time (for example, after waking and after meals) twice daily with a goal of one bowel movement every 1-2 days. Stool should look like a sausage but with cracks on the surface, or like a snake, smooth and soft.
  - Take laxatives as prescribed by your provider.

Medication	Notes
Metamucil® (psyllium) Citrucel® (methylcellulose) FiberCon® (calcium polycarbophil) Benefiber® (fiber)	Must be taken with plenty of water Main side effects include bloated or “gassy” feeling, diarrhea and stomach cramps
Miralax® (polyethylene glycol) Enulose® (lactulose) Sorbitol	Take with plenty of water Main side effects include bloated or “gassy” feeling, nausea and stomach cramps
Senokot® (senna) Dulcolax® (bisacodyl)	Side effects include gas, upset stomach and stomach cramps

- Talk with the hospice nurse or doctor before starting or stopping a laxative.
- If there are any changes or worsening of symptoms, talk with your hospice nurse or doctor.

## References:

1. Rao, Satish SC. Constipation in the older adult. UpToDate (database online). Post TW, ed. UpToDate. Waltham, MA: UpToDate Inc. Updated May 21, 2018. <https://www-uptodate-com.mwu.idm.oclc.org>. Accessed April 15, 2019.
2. Bladder and Bowel Foundation. Bristol Stool Chart. Accessed May 7, 2019. Available from: [https://www.bladderandbowel.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/BBC002\\_Bristol-Stool-Chart-Jan-2016.pdf](https://www.bladderandbowel.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/BBC002_Bristol-Stool-Chart-Jan-2016.pdf)
3. Clinical Pharmacology [database online]. Tampa, FL: Elsevier/Gold Standard, Inc.; 2019. Accessed 2019 May.