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Constipation

Constipation is a decrease in the frequency of bowel movements, difficulty in passing stool, hard stools, incomplete emptying of the bowel, or any combination of these. It is an uncomfortable yet common side effect of medications for pain, nausea, or chemotherapy. Other causes of constipation include:

- Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement.
- Not having enough time or privacy to use the toilet.
- Decreased activity or mobility.
- Decreased fluid intake.
- Not eating enough fiber from sources such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Tips to Help Prevent or Treat Constipation

- Exercise as tolerated; walking is an excellent form of exercise.
- Drink eight, 8-ounce glasses (2 liters) of fluid daily. Water, juices, soups, ice cream shakes, and other beverages are some of the fluids you could have.
- Gradually increase the daily amount of fiber in your diet to a total of 25 - 35 grams. Foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and cereals contain fiber.
- Use over-the-counter stool softeners such as Colace or Senokot one to two pills per day
- Use over-the-counter Milk of Magnesia at bedtime
- If stool softeners and Milk of Magnesia at bedtime do not work, try Milk of Magnesia every 6 hours

Call the Clinic if You:

- Do not have a bowel movement at least every three days
- Are constipated and vomiting
- Are unable to pass gas or feel bloated