

Medical Oncology

Constipation Information Sheet

Helpful Tips to Prevent Constipation

- Drink plenty of fluids each day - at least 8-10 eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated fluid each day. Try water, prune juice, warm juices, decaffeinated teas, and hot lemonade.
- Try to eat around the same times each day.
- Drinking warm fluids helps with constipation.
- Increase the amount of fiber each day such as, fruits and vegetables (raw or cooked, include skins and peels), fruit paste, whole grain cereals, breads and crackers, beans, peas and popcorn. Add these slowly to your diet and be sure to increase your fluid intake to prevent bloating and gas.
- Add prunes or prune juice, dried apricots and other dried fruits and nuts to your diet.
- Do light to moderate physical activity. Talk to your doctor about how much and what type of exercise is right for you.
- **Try constipation pudding:** 1 T. All-Bran cereal, 1 T. applesauce, 1 T. prune juice. Let sit for about 30 minutes after mixing before eating. Take 3 T. daily with a large glass of water. It is best to take after breakfast or before bedtime.

Medicines

If you experience constipation, some over the counter laxatives or stool softeners may help you have a bowel movement.

- **Stool Softeners**
 - Senokot® (Docusate and Senna)
- **Laxatives**
 - Senokot-S® (Docusate Salts)
 - MiraLAX® (Polyethylene Glycol 3350)
 - Peri-Colace® (Docusate and Senna)

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Laxative Protocol

The overall goal is to have a bowel movement every one to two days. Because responses vary, use the guidelines below to find what works best for you. If, at any time, the dose of your pain-relieving medicine is changed, you may also need to increase or decrease your daily dose of laxative. *See your doctor if you believe a change in laxative dose may be necessary.*

1. Take two Senokot-S tablets (a generic form is available at your pharmacy) at bedtime.
2. If you do not have a bowel movement in the morning, take two Senokot-S tablets after breakfast.
3. If you do not have a bowel movement by evening, take three Senokot-S tablets at bedtime.
4. If you have not had a bowel movement by the next morning, take three Senokot-S tablets after breakfast.
5. If there is no bowel movement within 2 days after starting this protocol, add oral Dulcolax after breakfast, while continuing to take three Senokot-S tablets in the morning and three Senokot-S tablets in the evening. Call your cancer nurse for further direction.

Once you start having bowel movements, use the two steps prior to the last step you took as your daily laxative protocol. For example, if you achieved a bowel movement after Step 4, use Step 2 and Step 3 as your daily regimen.

Remember, constipation is a common side effect of many medicines. A daily bowel regimen helps to prevent this side effect.

Call Your Doctor or Nurse

- If you do not have a bowel movement within 4 days after beginning this laxative protocol.
- If you have severe abdominal pain.

See the *Chemotherapy and Immunotherapy Patient Guide* book for more information.

If you have questions or concerns, please call your care team at:
Bronson Cancer Center – Battle Creek 269-245-8660
Bronson Cancer Center – Kalamazoo 269-286-7170