

Constipation

Signs and symptoms

If you are constipated, you may experience these symptoms:

- No bowel movement for more than two or three days
- Change or decrease in your regular pattern of bowel movement
- Having bowel movements that are uncomfortable and difficult for you to pass
- Passing small, lumpy and hard stools
- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Moving your bowels, but still feeling uncomfortable—such as having abdominal discomfort, bloating, nausea, hemorrhoids or even diarrhea

The following may cause less frequent bowel movements and difficulty passing stools:

- Decreased activity
- Older age or weakness
- Eating and drinking less
- Medication use (your care team will discuss your medications and tell you which ones may cause constipation.)

What you can do to help prevent or relieve constipation:

- Talk to your care team about your bowel movement patterns.
- Drink more fluids, if you can—especially water. Or try hot lemon water, warm prune juice and other juices. Drink as much fluid as is comfortable.
- Increase your fiber intake, if you can. High-fiber foods include fresh fruit and vegetables, oatmeal, wheat breads and grains, or brown rice.
- Use bowel medications as recommended by your care team and doctor.

When should you call your care team about constipation?

- You have a change in the color, texture, smell or frequency of your bowel movements.
- You are having difficulty passing stool.
- You have gone longer than two to three days without having a bowel movement.
- Your belly is firm or painful.