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.