

Constipation

Information for Patients on Cancer Treatment

Constipation happens if you have not had a poo for 2 to 3 days. You may have to push harder to poo, your poo may look like small round balls, or you may feel like you still need to poo after already going to the washroom. Constipation can also cause stomach pain and nausea.

There are many causes of constipation, including:

- Cancer treatments
- Pain medications
- Nausea medications

To prevent constipation, you should:

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of water per day
- Move your body
- Make a routine of going to the bathroom around the same time each day
- Eat foods high in fibre, unless your doctor told you that you have a bowel obstruction

What should I do if I am constipated?

If you are constipated, you can try two different types of over-the-counter medications to help make you poo:

Lactulose (Acilac®) OR Polyethylene glycol (Restoralax®)

Lactulose (Acilac®): Take 15 mL (1 tablespoon) per day to start. If you still cannot poo, you can take up to 30 mL (2 tablespoons) twice per day.

Polyethylene glycol (Restoralax®): Mix 17 g of the powder in 125 to 250 mL of water or juice per day.

Sennosides (Senokot®) OR Bisacodyl (Dulcolax®)

Sennosides (Senokot®): Take 1 to 4 tablets at bedtime to start. If you still cannot poo, you can take up to 4 tablets twice a day. Do not take more than 8 tablets per day.

Bisacodyl (Dulcolax®): Take 1 to 3 tablets at bedtime to start. If you still cannot poo, you can take up to 3 tablets 3 times per day. Do not take more than 9 tablets per day.

Call the Clinic Nurse at (416) 469-6580 ext. 2752 if:

- You have new bright red or black poo
- You throw up black vomit because you are constipated
- You have not had a poo in over 5 days