

Tips for Managing Constipation While on Chemotherapy

Things you can do on your own



Keep track of your constipation:

- Write down when you have bowel movements
- Notice and write down any relationship between your diet and bowel movements

Stay hydrated:

- Drink 6-8 cups of liquids, such as water, per day
 - If you have been previously told by any physician that you need to limit your fluid intake, please stick to the fluid restriction limits given
- Drink hot liquids
- Drink prune juice

Stay active and make changes to reduce your symptoms:

- Do light exercise (e.g. walking)

Understand what might be causing constipation:

- Use of some medications, such as opioids (fentanyl, morphine) and anti-nausea medications (ondansetron, granisetron), can lead to constipation
 - o You can take laxatives (e.g. lactulose or forlax or senna) pre-emptively to reduce the likelihood of constipation
- A change in diet or medications can lead to constipation
- Constipation can occasionally be an early sign that your bowels are not working well (ileus or bowel obstruction)

Things you can do on your own



Trial of over-the-counter medications:

- First line – either Lactulose OR Forlax
- Lactulose
 - Take 10mls three times daily as needed
 - It may take up to 24-48hours to produce a normal bowel movement
 - Amount and frequency of lactulose can be reduced or stopped based on bowel movement and frequency
- Forlax (Macrogol)
 - Take 1-2 sachet per day as needed
 - It may take up to 24-48hours to produce a normal bowel movement
 - Amount and frequency of forlax can be reduced or stopped based on bowel movement and frequency
- Senna
 - Take 1-2 tablets per day when needed if still constipated despite lactulose or forlax
- Do not take fiber supplements without checking with your care team

REMINDER - Always keep your care team updated about over-the-counter medicines you are taking. If your care team tells you they are not safe for you, do not take them.

When to seek medical attention



- If after trying these tips, your constipation stays the same or gets worse
- If there is new blood in your stool, or the blood is becoming more frequent
- If you are unable to pass gas for a day or more
- If your abdomen is swollen and feels hard
- If you have worsening abdominal pain
- If you think you have a large amount of stool stuck in your rectum
- If you develop nausea and vomiting in addition to constipation



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Department of Oncology
PECC-ONC-ED-2025-2079-v1

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