

Constipation is a common and unpleasant problem. Constipation is a decrease in the frequency of having a bowel movement generally less than 3 times a week, hard dry stool that is difficult to pass.

Constipation can occur for reasons such as decreased mobility from surgery or injuries, decreased intake of food, limited intake of water or fluids, and the use of opioid pain medications (such as oxycodone including Percocet[®], morphine including MS Contin[®], hydrocodone/acetaminophen including Vicodin[®] or Norco[®]). Many medications have the side effect of constipation.

Constipation may decrease your appetite; contribute to nausea, or passing of a small amount of stool that is excessively dry or hard.

To minimize your risk of constipation it is important to:

- 1. Drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids, especially water (only if you do not have a medical problem that limits fluids)*
- 2. Stay as mobile as you can. Follow the recommendations of your physician.
Exercise helps your colon to do its job.*
- 3. Eat food high in fiber including fruits, vegetable, legumes, and whole grains.
Increase fiber slowly to prevent side effects like bloating.*
- 4. Use a stool softener or fiber supplement – any over the counter brand*
- 5. Limit the use of opioid pain medication while maintaining your comfort level as needed*

When you experience constipation you are not only uncomfortable and feeling terrible but you are at an increased risk of having further complications.

You may also try over the counter laxative or suppository if you are still experiencing constipation.

If you have been experiencing constipation and it has not resolved in a couple of days with the above recommendations or you have persistent vomiting or abdominal pain report your symptoms to your physician as soon as possible.