

Constipation

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/constipation>

Constipation

is when you are not able to have a bowel movement (poop), or struggle to have a bowel movement, or not pooping as often as usual. Bowel movement changes are common in people who have cancer. Constipation may be caused by the cancer itself, chemotherapy, or many of the supportive medications that you require through treatments.

There are things you can do to help with constipation, see suggestions to the right.

Relieving side effects is an important part of cancer care and treatment. This is called symptom management or palliative care. Talk with your health care team about any symptoms you experience and any change in symptoms.

People with constipation may also experience the following symptoms:

- Belly pain and cramping
- Bloating
- Loss of appetite
- New or worsening heartburn
- Pressure in the rectum or worsening hemorrhoids
- Nausea or vomiting

Managing Constipation

It is important to prevent and treat constipation appropriately.

More severe constipation can result in rectal bleeding, dehydration, or unavoidable urgent care visits. It can slow the body's absorption of medications in some cases. Talk with your health care team early about the best way to manage your constipation given your circumstances.

Some of the following suggestions may help:

- Drink more liquids. Water is always a good option. Hot or warm fluids in the morning may help.
- More fiber (along with liquids) can often be helpful. If you have a narrowed bowel, your doctor may recommend a low-fiber or low-residue diet. Ask your doctor if fiber is right for you.
- Limit foods that can cause constipation such as dairy, calcium supplements, iron pills and bananas.
- Limit carbonated/fizzy drinks that can increase intestinal bloating
- Keep track of your laxative use and bowel movement so that problems can be identified and remedied quickly
- With the advice of the health care team, ask about changing the dose or stopping medicines that cause constipation, particularly calcium and iron.
- Increase physical activity, if possible.
- Ask your health care team whether laxatives, enemas, or suppositories are right for you. Though usually safe, these may be harmful in some cases.

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, Constipation](#)
- [American Cancer Society Constipation Information](#)
- [Chemocare, Constipation and Chemotherapy](#)
- [NCI, Gastrointestinal Complications \(PDQ®\)](#)
- [NIH, Constipation and Cancer Treatment](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Estreñimiento](#)
- [Cancer.Net: Estreñimiento](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Estreñimiento](#)