

Understanding Constipation & When to Contact Hospice

- ❑ Constipation is a condition where bowel movements become infrequent or difficult to pass.
- ❑ Constipation can vary from person to person. Some people have a normal pattern of having a bowel movement every 2-3 days, others have daily bowel movements.
- ❑ Even if there is little to no eating or drinking, the body still produces stool.
- ❑ There are many causes of constipation:
 - Certain medications
 - Decreased movement
 - Disease progression
 - Decreased food and fluids
- ❑ When to contact hospice:
 - There has been no bowel movement for 3 days.
 - There is new pain in the abdomen
 - There are new liquid stools
 - There are questions about medications

Some Common Medications to Prevent & Treat Constipation

- ❑ Signs of constipation:
 - Feeling bloated
 - Increased gas
 - Hard stools
 - Abdomen feels swollen
 - Straining or pain with bowel movements
 - No bowel movement for 3 days or more
 - Nausea
- ❑ Laxatives are often prescribed to take on a daily basis when there is a risk of constipation.
 - Common laxatives: senna, bisacodyl, polyethylene glycol (aka Miralax), Milk Of Magnesia, magnesium citrate, lactulose, etc.
- ❑ Stool softeners are not effective to help produce a bowel movement.
- ❑ Fiber supplements should be avoided unless there is a good amount of fluid intake throughout a day.

Interventions to Reduce the Risk of Constipation

- ❑ Take bowel medications as prescribed to avoid constipation.
- ❑ Track your bowel movements so the hospice team can see your bowel pattern.
- ❑ Contact hospice as soon as you feel like you are having an issue or have signs of constipation.
- ❑ Communicate any concerns you might have with hospice.

If symptoms are not managed or you have any questions, please contact your Confluence Health Home Care Services Hospice Team: (509) 433-3700