

# Constipation



Réseau de  
cancérologie  
Rossy

Rossy  
Cancer  
Network

## Symptom Management Tip Sheet

### Let's talk about constipation...



- Constipation is a decrease in bowel movements from your regular bowel movement schedule (usually, less than 3 bowel movements per week).
- It is often described by difficult passage of stools and stools that are hard.
- If your constipation is accompanied by a fever (temperature greater than 38°C) and/or nausea and vomiting, or abdominal pain, **PLEASE CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM IMMEDIATELY.**
- If you have not had a bowel movement in 3 days, no passing of gas in 24 hours, and your stomach is bloated, please **CONTACT YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM.**

*\* If you are undergoing IMMUNOTHERAPY and have these symptoms please contact your healthcare team as soon as possible. Delays can increase side effects and toxicity.*



### What you can do

- Try to use the toilet 30-60 minutes after meals.
- Drink fluids, about 6-8 glasses per day, especially warm or hot fluids.
- Limit your use of caffeine or alcohol.
- Slowly increase fiber intake to 25 grams per day.
- Eat fruits that can reduce constipation (dates, prunes, prune nectar, figs).
- Stay as active as possible (try walking 20-30 minutes, 3-5 times per week).

Based on: Remote Symptom Practice Guides for Adults on Cancer Treatments © 2020 D Stacey for the Pan-Canadian Oncology Symptom Triage and Remote Support (COSTaRS) Team. University of Ottawa School of Nursing and the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Ottawa, Canada.



### Other considerations

- Use a private toilet and avoid bedpans if possible.
- Avoid suppositories and enemas.
- Ask your healthcare team about any medications you may be taking that can cause or worsen your constipation.
- Ask your pharmacist or healthcare team about taking laxatives.

*This information should not be considered as medical advice. It is not to be used in place of a visit with a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional. If you have questions about your individual medical situation, please consult with your healthcare professional.*

### Other resources

#### Managing Constipation

<https://bit.ly/ccco-constipation>

#### Constipation Caused by Meds

<http://bit.ly/bccancer-medsconstipation>

#### Relieving Constipation (video)

<https://bit.ly/youtube-constipation>

#### More resources at

[mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/patient](http://mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/patient)

### Who can help



#### Nurse Navigator (IPO)

If you have one, please speak with your IPO

#### Oncology Pharmacy

514-340-8222 ext. 25940

#### Dietitian

Ask your doctor or nurse for a referral

### If you are getting treatment at:

#### ▪ Oncology Clinic, call:

Symptom Management Hotline

514-340-8222 ext. 25529

Mon – Fri. 8h00-16h00

Nights/Weekends: 514-340-8232

#### ▪ Radiation Oncology Clinic, call:

514-340-8222 ext. 24124