

## Constipation

**Diagnosis:** Constipation, although very common in our country, is **not** normal or healthy. Stooling every day or several times a day **doesn't** mean you are not constipated. A normal stooling pattern is typically 1 to 3 soft, nonbulky, nonpainful stools per day without apparent blood.

: Signs of constipation include

- abdominal pain
- pellet-like stools
- very large/bulky stools
- clogging the toilet
- straining while stooling
- bleeding (including blood noted on the toilet paper, on the stool, or in the toilet water)
- stool steaking in the diaper or on the underwear ("tire tracks")

**Treatment:** Effective treatment is not complicated, but is long and tedious.

: A proper diet is important, but rarely curative by itself.

- Provide adequate fiber such as **whole** grain breads and cereals, fresh fruits (especially prunes, pears, and apples), and vegetables.
- Avoid **excess** milk product intake. Limit milk and milk products to 16 ounces per day (24 ounces if 4 to 8 years old, 36 ounces if 9 to 18 years old).
  - \*1 slice of American cheese equals 4 oz. of milk
  - \*1 piece of string cheese equals 6 oz. of milk
  - \*1 oz. of yogurt equals 1 oz. of milk
- Minimize juice, pop, and Gatorade since these are empty calories and it is easy to fill-up on these at the expense of good food.

: Medications, such as those listed below, are frequently necessary for effective treatment, but **we recommend that that be used only under the direction of a Physician:**

mineral oil  
senna  
Metamucil (polyethylene glycol)  
MiraLax  
Colace (docusate sodium)  
Benefiber

- : Sitting on the toilet 4 times per day (breakfast, lunch, dinner, bedtime) and trying to pass a stool for about 2 minutes is an important part of the retraining process.
- : We will titrate (adjust) the therapy so as to obtain a normal stooling pattern. The medications will usually be continued for at least 6 months prior to **weaning**. This is necessary so the bowels have enough time to be retrained. **Do not stop the medication abruptly or without talking with us.**
- : Please call us with a progress report in \_\_\_\_\_. Also call whenever a problem or question arises. **Good communication and consistent treatment is absolutely necessary for a successful outcome.**