

# Oncology Symptom: Constipation

## What is constipation?

- Constipation is when you are having trouble passing stools.

## What causes constipation?

- Constipation can be a side effect of cancer treatments or pain medications.
- Constipation should gradually go away about a week after therapy.

## How will I know if I have constipation?

- You may have constipation if you are not passing stools regularly or if your stools are hard.

## What should I do if I think I have constipation?

- You should **tell your doctor or nurse** if you do not have a bowel movement for more than 3 days.

## What can I do to prevent constipation?

- If you are taking pain medications, take doses on a regular schedule.
- If approved by your doctor, eat high-fiber foods such as unpeeled raw fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals, breads and rice, nuts, seeds and raisins.
- Drink at least 6, 8-ounce glasses of fluid each day.
- Drink hot fluids such as tea, bouillon, or warm milk at breakfast and with other meals to stimulate your bowels to empty.
- Drink fruit juices with pulp.
- Add bulk agents to fruit juices.
- Stay away from sodas and ice tea as both can cause gas.
- Avoid drinking from a straw as this can increase gas.
- Stay active with a light exercise program that includes short walks around your house or neighborhood.
- Do not take enemas, laxatives, or stool softeners without checking with your doctor or nurse first.