

Preventing and Treating Constipation in Gyn/Onc Patients

Your constipation may be caused by:

- Recent surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Opioids

Prevention

- Drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids.
- Stay active.
- While on opioids, take a stool softener (docusate sodium/colace) 100 mg twice daily and MiraLAX[®] 17 gm once daily. You can buy these without a doctor's order at the drugstore.

Treatment

If you have no bowel movement within 48 hours after going home, follow the guidelines in this handout. Your treatment option depends on if you have had surgery on your bowels.

Have you had surgery on your bowels in the last month?

I don't know if I had surgery on my bowels.

- Call to review your records.

Yes, I have had surgery on my bowels in the last month.

- Increase MiraLAX[®] to twice daily dosing **or** take 2-4 tablespoons of Milk of Magnesia. Call if you do not have a bowel movement within 4-6 hours of taking milk of magnesia **or** within 12 hours of increasing MiraLAX[®].

No, I have not had surgery in the last month.

- Use a Dulcolax[®] suppository. You should have a bowel movement within 4-6 hours. Call if you do not have a bowel movement within 4-6 hours.

When to Call

- If you are constipated and have nausea and vomiting.
- If you are constipated and unsure if you had surgery on your bowels in the last month.
- If the treatments listed in this handout have not worked.

Who to Call

Gynecology Oncology RN Triage
Line/After Hours Line
608-263-1548

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 4/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7668.