Preventing and Treating Constipation in Gyn/Onc Patients

Read this handout to learn what can cause constipation, how to help prevent it, and what to do if it happens after you go home. Your constipation may be caused by:

- Recent surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Opioids

Prevention

You can help prevent constipation by:

- Drinking plenty of water
- Drinking noncaffeinated fluids
- Staying active

Treatment

Your treatment depends on whether you have had bowel surgery in the last month. If you do not have a bowel movement within 48 hours after going home, follow the steps below.

- **If you do not know if you had surgery on your bowels in the last month:** call to review your records
- **If you did have surgery 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®.
- **If you did not have surgery in the last month:** use a Dulcolax® suppository. Call if you do not have a bowel movement within 4-6 hours.

When to Call

Call the clinic if treatment has not worked or if you:

- Are constipated
- Have nausea and/or are vomiting

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit http://www.uwhealth.org/.

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 © 5/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7668.