

POST-OPERATIVE CONSTIPATION MANAGEMENT

Post-Operative Constipation:

One common side effect of opioids is constipation. Opioids are pain medications that are often prescribed after surgery to help manage pain. Common opioids prescribed are oxycodone, hydrocodone (Norco), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), tramadol, and codeine. Opioids can slow down

the bowels which can cause constipation (meaning you can't poop). Bowel care is important to prevent constipation, which after multiple days of being unable to pass a bowel movement, you may have to go the emergency room. You should typically start passing gas the day after your surgery and your first bowel movement commonly occurs 2-4 days post-op.

Here are some things you can do daily to help with constipation:

- Walking or standing for a few minutes every hour
- Drinking plenty of fluids (at least 6 cups of water per day)
- Limiting the amount of opioids you take daily by using other over-the-counter medications to help manage your pain as directed (Tylenol, ibuprofen, etc.)
- Drinking prune juice or eating lots of fiber (such as green leafy vegetables and fresh fruit)
- You can consider taking a daily fiber supplement such as Metamucil or Citrucel

****If you are prone to constipation, consider starting these 2 weeks prior to surgery****

Here are some steps to get things moving:

Post-Operative DAY 1:

Take 1-2 tablets of a stool softener like senna or sennosides (senna + Colace) twice daily.

Post-Operative DAY 2 and DAY 3:

Add 1-2 capful(s) of MiraLAX (polyethylene glycol) in 8 oz of water or juice twice daily.

Post-Operative DAY 4:

Add 1 dose of Milk of Magnesia (magnesium hydroxide) or Dulcolax (bisacodyl). You can take these up to twice daily.

Post-Operative DAY 5:

Call your surgical team. We will likely have you add magnesium citrate, drink ½ to 1 bottle.