



Constipation

Let's face it: It's no fun to talk about constipation or frequency of your bowel movements. But to keep you comfortable, your Agrace team must ask you about your bowel habits—often—because what is normal may change while you are ill and on medication. We will ask what words you prefer to use to talk about bowel movements (for example, “stool,” “poop,” “BM”). There is a bowel movement tracker in the “Tracking” section of this handbook where you can record information for your care team.

Signs and symptoms:

If you are constipated, you may experience these symptoms:

- No bowel movement for more than two or three days
- Change or decrease in your regular pattern of bowel movement
- Having bowel movements that are uncomfortable and difficult for you to pass
- Passing small, lumpy and hard stools
- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Moving your bowels, but still feeling uncomfortable—such as having abdominal discomfort, bloating, nausea, hemorrhoids or even diarrhea

The following may cause less frequent bowel movements and difficulty passing stools:

- Decreased activity
- Older age or weakness
- Eating and drinking less
- Medication use (Your care team will discuss your medications and tell you which ones may cause constipation.)

What you can do to help prevent or relieve constipation:

- Talk to your Agrace team about your bowel movement patterns (it may help to use the tracker in the “Tracking” section of this handbook).
- Drink more fluids, if you can—especially water. Or try hot lemon water, warm prune juice and other juices. Drink as much fluid as is comfortable.
- Increase your fiber intake, if you can. High-fiber foods include fresh fruit and vegetables, oatmeal, wheat breads and grains, or brown rice.
- Use bowel medications as recommended by your care team and doctor.

When should you call your care team about constipation?

- You have a change in the color, texture, smell or frequency of your bowel movements.
- You are having difficulty passing stool.
- You have gone longer than two to three days without having a bowel movement.
- Your belly is firm or painful.