



## Patient Information

# PREVENTING CONSTIPATION AFTER BARIATRIC SURGERY

Constipation is defined as having fewer bowel movements (BM's) than normal or hard stools that require straining to pass. You may experience constipation during your recovery from the surgery.

### Why Do I Get Constipated?

There are many reasons why you get constipated. Some of them are specific to your recent surgical experience:

- ✓ Medication for pain (ex. Narcotics)
- ✓ Dehydration
- ✓ Not enough fibre in your diet
- ✓ Lack of physical activity
- ✓ Being bed-ridden or chair bound
- ✓ Emotional Stress and Anxiety

### How can I prevent constipation?

#### 1. Drink Enough Fluids

- ✓ Drink 6-8 cups (or 1.5 – 2 liters) of fluid per day. Bring your cup or bottle with you and sip water throughout the day
  - ✓ **TIP** drink out of the same container so this can help you know how much fluid you are getting
- ✓ Limit to 1 cup of coffee per day because caffeine can make you dehydrated
- ✓ Other fluids such as soups, broth, diet jello, etc. count too
- ✓ Drink enough fluids to keep your urine a clear, pale yellow colour

#### 2. Be More Active

- ✓ Get Moving! In order for your bowels to move you have to move
- ✓ Increase your physical activity. You can walk 2 – 3 times throughout the day for 10 – 15 minutes each time.

#### 3. Use Medications

- ✓ Take Docusate Sodium for the first month after your surgery

Medication	How Much?	How Often
Docusate Sodium (Colace/Soflax)	1 tab (100mg)	2 times a day for 1 month (1 in the morning and 1 at night)



- ✓ Take Senokot starting from the first day after discharge; however, if you experience diarrhea or abdominal cramping, STOP TAKING SENOKOT

Medication	How Much?	How Often
Senna/Senokot	2 tablets	At bedtime for 5 nights

## What can I do to Treat Constipation?

### 1. If you still do not have a bowel movement 5 days after surgery:

- ✓ Take Milk of Magnesia

Medication	How Much?	How Often
Milk of Magnesia	30 mL	Once

- ✓ If you have tried Milk of Magnesia and still have no bowel movement in 24 hours, you may use a Glycerin suppository, one time. At this point it is important to notify your family doctor as you may need further assessment and treatment

Medication	How Much?	How Often
Glycerin Suppository	1	Once

**If you continue to have difficulties with constipation, please consult your family physician or pharmacist for advice.**

Please seek immediate attention if:

- ✓ No bowel movements for three days
- ✓ Not passing gas
- ✓ Bloating or pain in your abdomen
- ✓ Nausea and vomiting
- ✓ Blood in your stool