CONSTITUTION

Infrequent (three or fewer times per week) or uncomfortable passing of stool due to inactivity, medications, and other conditions: dehydration, low-fiber diet, obstruction, anxiety, opioid use. Lack of a single bowel movement in 72 hours, is considered as too long. By three days, stool becomes hard and more difficult to pass. Older adults are more prone to constipation.

History:

- Date of last bowel movement
- Infrequent and difficult passage of stool
- Cramping/bloating
- Pain during/between or absence of bowel movements
- Nausea/loss of appetite
- Chronic bowel problems/surgery
- Medications (diuretics, narcotics, antidepressants)

Assessment:

- Obtain vital signs
- Assess for:
  - Normal bowel habits
  - Dietary and medication consumption
  - Pain or tenderness

Treatment:

- Dependent on assessment
- Encourage to eat more fruits, vegetables, and fiber or bran
- Increase fluid intake of water or non-caffeinated beverages
- Avoid or limit alcohol beverages and caffeine which can lead to dehydration
- Gentle exercise such as short walks up to 20 minutes daily
- Recommend taking previously effective medicine
- Encourage OTC medicines appropriate to the situation: stool softeners, laxatives, or enemas
- Schedule time each day for a toileting break

Refer to Primary Care Provider:

- Any case that causes client great concern or with abdominal tenderness
- Any marked change from usual bowel habits
- Presence of blood in stool. Leakage of wet, diarrhea-like stool in between bowel movements
- Any case that also involves fever, vomiting, or poor feeding

Reference

WebMD. Constipation, Age 12 and older- Home Treatment. Retrieved electronically October 17, 2017 from https://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/tc/constipation-age-12-and-older-home-treatment#1

This Page Intentionally Left Blank