

CONSTIPATION AND OBSTRUCTION



DEFINITION:

Constipation refers to a change in bowel habits but has varied meanings. It may mean that stools are:

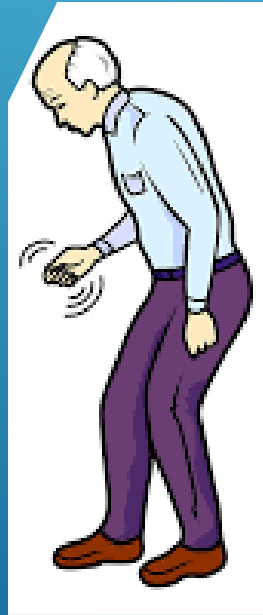
- too hard or too small
- difficult to pass
- infrequent (less than 3 times/week)

Constipation may be accompanied by bloating, abdominal discomfort, and straining on the toilet.

MOST COMMON CAUSES:

- ▶ Dehydration
- ▶ Lack of exercise
- ▶ Low dietary fiber

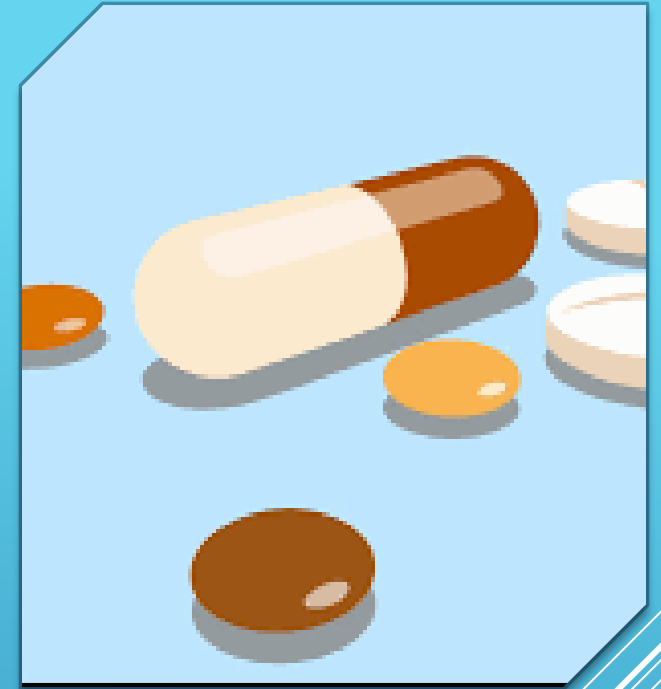




OTHER CAUSES:

- ▶ Pregnancy
- ▶ Hypothyroidism
- ▶ Irritable bowel syndrome
- ▶ Bowel obstruction
- ▶ Neurological disorders
 - Parkinson's disease, MS
 - Diabetes, Stroke
- ▶ Autoimmune diseases
- ▶ Colon cancer

- ◆ Opioids (narcotics such as hydrocodone)
- ◆ Anticholinergic drugs:
 - antihistamines
 - muscle relaxers
 - antipsychotics
 - some antidepressants
 - drugs used for urinary incontinence
- ◆ Iron supplements
- ◆ Benzodiazepines
- ◆ Aluminum containing medications (antacids, sucralfate)



MEDICATIONS THAT CAUSE CONSTIPATION:

Abdominal pain

Nausea, vomiting

Urinary retention

Hemorrhoids

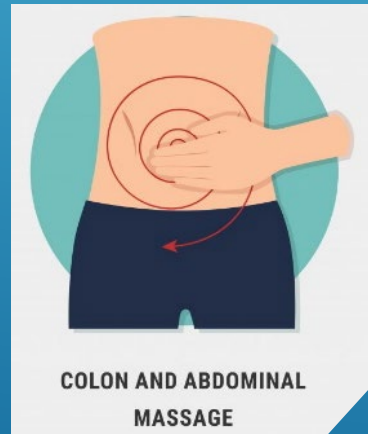
Stool impaction

Rectal ulcers

Anal fissures



COMPLICATIONS:



- ▶ Get regular exercise
- ▶ Massaging the abdominal wall can help
- ▶ Keep a regular time to use a toilet - bowels are most active following meals and stool may pass more readily after eating.
 - If signals to pass stool are ignored, over time those signals become weaker. It is important to pay attention to signals from the body and to have access to a restroom after meals.

BEHAVIORAL TREATMENT:

TREATMENT:

- There are many treatments for constipation from stool softeners to laxatives.
- Fiber and water are the two most important components for preventing and treating constipation.
 - Fiber: 20 to 35 grams per day is recommended.
 - Fluid: requirements increase with sweating, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, some activities, and hot weather.



OBSTRUCTION

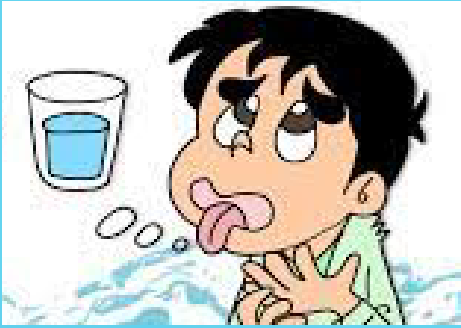
Severe constipation can result in serious complications including fecal impaction and bowel obstruction.



BOWEL OBSTRUCTION:

- ▶ The intestines can be partly or completely blocked.
- ▶ A complete block can lead to serious problems because:
 - the wall of the intestine can tear, causing an abdominal infection, or
 - parts of the intestine can die due to lack of blood flow caused by swelling and pressure on the intestinal wall.





Poor diet – low fiber intake

Dehydration

Decreased mobility

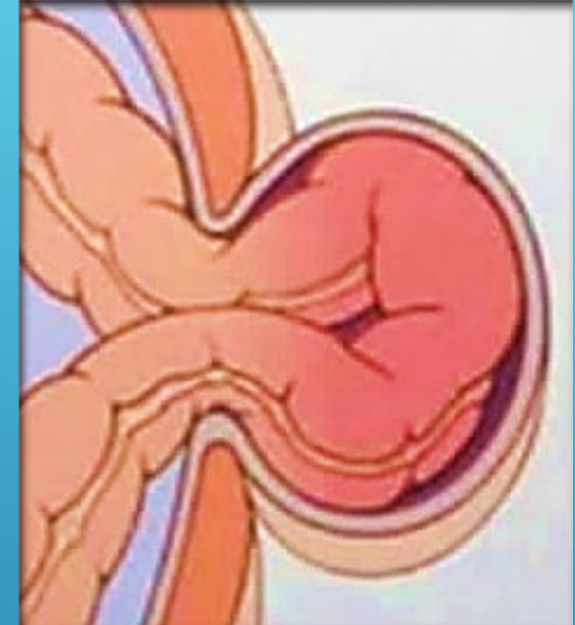
Medications

RISKS FOR BOWEL OBSTRUCTION



Herniations:

- ▶ A hernia is an opening in the muscle and a small loop of bowel can slide through the opening and get trapped



TYPES OF BLOCKAGE - 1

Adhesions:

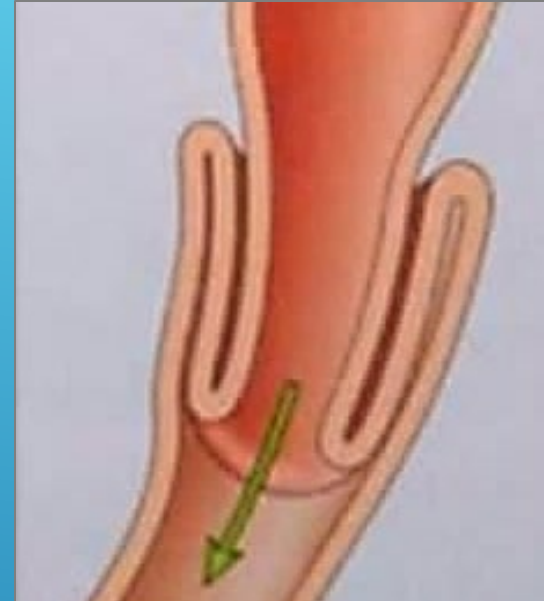
- ▶ Adhesions are bands of scar tissue that cause the intestines to stick together, stick to the abdominal wall, and/or stick to other organs resulting in pressure on the intestines and causing an obstruction.



TYPES OF BLOCKAGE - 2

Intussusception:

- ▶ Part of the intestine slides into an adjacent part of the intestine like a telescope.
- ▶ Pronounced: in-tuh-suh-SEP-shun



TYPES OF BLOCKAGE - 3

Volvulus:

- ▶ A loop of bowel twists around itself



TYPES OF BLOCKAGE - 4

Tumors:

- ▶ Malignant and non-malignant tumors can grow inside the intestine and block it, or a tumor can cause a blockage from the outside



tumor

TYPES OF BLOCKAGE - 5

SYMPTOMS:

Symptoms depend on where the intestine is blocked and how completely it is blocked.

Symptoms include:

- Refusal to eat
- Nausea and vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Bloating/distention of abdomen
- Inability to have a bowel movement
- Liquid diarrhea may be seen if stool manages to seep around the blockage



CONSTIPATION & OBSTRUCTION



Thank you
Jean Justad, MD
Medical Director DDP
2023