

Opioid induced constipation can start after just 1 or 2 doses of an opioid, can last as long as your child is taking the pain medicine, and can cause some serious health problems. *It is important to prevent constipation from starting.* Following this plan will help to keep the stools normal and bowel movements (BM) regular.

If your child is taking an opioid

It is important to follow this plan for preventing constipation *before it starts*. Common opioids are: Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, and Codeine

How opioids cause constipation

Special cells (called opioid receptor cells) are found in the nervous system and also inside the wall of the colon and rectum.

1. Opioids attach to the special cells in the nervous system. *This blocks the pain.*
2. Opioids attach to special cells in the colon. *This causes stool to slowly move through the colon. Stool stays in the colon longer.*
3. Opioids attach to special cells in the rectum. *This decreases the urge to have a BM and stool will stay in the rectum longer.*

Constipation signs to watch for

Call your doctor if your child is taking an opioid pain medicine and develops any of these symptoms.

- Stools hard, dry, large
- Pain during BM.
- Difficult to pass stool.
- Stomach cramping.
- Straining
- Nausea, vomiting
- Abdomen feels full and firm
- Abdomen bloated
- Decrease in number of stools: Less than 3/wk
- Cannot pass stool or only part of stool
- Few drops of blood on stool or toilet paper.

Prevention and Treatment Plan

1. Keep stools from becoming dry

Drink more water and less caffeine.

- Amount of water children need each day depends on weight, age and activity level.
- Most school age children need at least 3 to 4 glasses of water each day.
- Try to drink water throughout the day.

2. Keep stools soft

Eat more soluble fiber.

- This includes fruits and leafy vegetables.
- Avoid fast foods and fatty foods. They are difficult to digest.

3. Keep stools moving through colon

Physical activity gets the bowels moving.

- Plan activities that include moving and walking. Exercise.

4. Develop daily routine for BM

Schedule same time each day to sit on toilet.

- Allow at least 10 minutes. Provide privacy.
- Encourage your child to go to the bathroom whenever they feel the urge. Do not hold back stool.

Stool softener or laxative

Only use if suggested by your doctor

There are different types of medicines for treating OIC. Your doctor will decide the medicine that works best for your child.

It is important to take this medicine as prescribed by your doctor.

The healthcare provider talked to me about the information in this handout.

- I know what I need to do.
- I know why doing this is important.
- All my questions have been answered.
- I have a copy of this handout.

Patient Name

Patient, Parent, or Legally Authorized Representative

Printed Name

Signed Name

Your Relationship to the Patient

Date

Time a.m. / p.m.

_____ **For staff use only** _____

Opioid-Induced-Constipation

Healthcare Provider

MRN (Medical Record Number)

Printed Name

Signed Name

Date

Time a.m. / p.m.

Interpreter

Printed Name

Signed Name

Interpreter Number

Date

Time a.m. / p.m.

Print or imprint Patient Information

MRN _____

CSN _____