

POST-OPERATIVE BOWEL CARE / CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a very common complication following joint replacement. Exposure to anesthesia, narcotics, fluctuations in diet and hydration, and decreased physical activity all contribute to its onset. Though preventable, it can lead to serious medical conditions if not treated promptly. Do not wait until pain, extreme bloating, nausea, or other side effects occur—**call your surgeon's office if you are struggling with symptoms of constipation.** Your provider can offer additional over-the-counter solutions to provide relief.

Calling your surgeon's office should be your first step when dealing with issues around constipation. Their knowledgeable providers are typically able to address your needs and help you avoid a trip to urgent care or emergency department.

Until you have a regular bowel movements we encourage you to follow the below regimen.

1. You will be prescribed MiraLax (Polyethylene Glycol, PEG), which is a mild laxative. It is also available over the counter. You will start the night of surgery and will continue to take twice a day until you have regular bowel movements. You will need to mix one packet (17 grams) with at least 8 ounces of water.
2. If you have not had a bowel movement in two days (48 hours) after surgery, continue with MiraLax twice a daily; add the prescribed Bisacodyl suppository as directed on the instruction packet. This can also be purchased over the counter.
3. If you have not had a bowel movement 4 days after surgery, then contact your surgeon's office.
4. At 4 days after discharge from the hospital OR if constipation symptoms become severe sooner, the office may suggest further interventions. **This typically does not require a trip to the emergency room or urgent care.**

If you have a **history of constipation** or do not have regular bowel movements we encourage you to start over-the-counter Miralax 3 days prior to surgery. Use as directed on the packaging.

Please discontinue the use of stool softeners when:

- You begin having regular bowel movements
- You begin having diarrhea/loose stools—**call your surgeon's office.**
- You develop sudden onset abdomen pain, nausea, or vomiting--**call your surgeon's office immediately.**

Proper hydration, diet and mobility are essential ingredients to bowel regularity. Please aim to drink at least 64 oz of hydrating fluids per day, eat foods high in fiber, and stay active!

Fluids that help to hydrate your body include water, Gatorade and pedialyte. You should aim to drink a combination of water / Gatorade (50/50 mixture) or pedialyte daily for the first week after surgery. Aim for a minimum of 64 ounces per day.

We strongly encourage placing a motion sensor nightlight in your bedroom to help light your pathway to your bathroom. This will prevent falls in case you need to use the bathroom in the middle of the night.

Foods high in fiber that **HELP PREVENT** CONSTIPATION include:

- Fruits such as pears, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, navel oranges, apples
- Vegetables such as artichoke, green peas, acorn squash, collard greens, broccoli, carrots, frozen mixed vegetables, sweet potato, yams
- Fiber-rich whole grains such as cracked wheat, quinoa, whole-wheat pasta, buckwheat, oatmeal, brown rice, wild rice and couscous.

Foods and beverages to **AVOID** until you are having regular bowel movements:

- Dairy products
- Fried foods

- Eggs
- Chocolate
- Caffeine drinks including coffee, black tea, soda and energy drinks

Daily activity is extremely important and should include:

- Daily exercises from your physical therapist as prescribed
- Walking safely in the home with your assistive device
- Ankle pumps and body repositioning every 20-30 minutes when reading a book or watching TV

Bowel Movements	After surgery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start Miralax the night of surgery once you are home. You will take this twice a day until bowel movements become regular. Stop for diarrhea and/or loose stools. • Aim to drink 64 oz of hydrating fluid daily including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water ○ Gatorade ○ Pedialyte • Include natural foods high in fiber in your diet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fruits ○ Vegetables ○ Whole grains • MOVE—mobility is essential for regularity. • <i>At any point following surgery if you develop sudden onset abdominal pain, nausea/vomiting, or excessive bloating, excessive diarrhea, contact our office immediately.</i> 	If <u>no</u> bowel movement after 2 days of being discharged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with the prescribed Miralax twice a day until bowel movements become regular. • <u>Add</u> Bisacodyl suppository as directed per packaging instructions. • Continue with proper nutrition and diet. • Stop taking if you develop loose stools/diarrhea or if you become regular. • Remain active. 	If <u>no</u> bowel movement after 4 days of being discharged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact your surgeon's office • Continue with proper hydration and diet. • Remain active.
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