

Patient Fact Sheet

Constipation Following Surgery

Constipation is often one of the problems you may experience following your surgery. It is a result of the stress of surgery and taking frequent pain medication. All effective pain medication has a side-effect of causing constipation by slowing down the intestinal movements. If not addressed early, this can produce quite a significant problem.

This may be overcome by changing lifestyle e.g. increased fluid and fibre intake or by taking laxatives such as Metamucil or Fybogel. A combination of the two may be needed to return to a more comfortable bowel habit.

In hospital the nursing staff will offer you medication if you are having a significant problem with constipation and you can talk to them about having a high fibre diet whilst in hospital.

Hints for High Fibre Diet

- Drink plenty of fluids – (at least six glasses per day)
- Prune, apple or pear juice with breakfast
- Eat root vegetables or fruit with the skin left on
- Have vegetables raw or lightly cooked
- Eat legumes – baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Eat wholemeal rice and pasta
- Limit the amount of black tea consumed
- Fibre supplements – such as Metamucil and Fybogel
- Light exercise every day (this may include a simple 10 minute walk)