What Is Constipation?
Constipation means infrequent bowel movements with hard stools. Stomach cramping, rectal pain, bloating, nausea, and feeling full after a bowel movement are symptoms of constipation.

What Causes Constipation?
Constipation that occurs during cancer treatment has many causes:
- Abdominal surgery
- Bowel obstruction
- Dehydration
- Less food intake or a low-fiber diet
- Narcotics or pain medications
- Some chemotherapy medications
- Tumor growth

How Can I Prevent Constipation?
Constipation is best prevented by these methods:
- Talk with your health care provider to set a bowel management plan before starting narcotic or chemotherapy medications.
- Drink more water, juice, or other non-caffeinated and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Be physically active (ask your health care provider what is best for you).

When Should I Call My Doctor or Nurse?
Before calling your health care provider, try over-the-counter products:
1. First, take two Senna-S (Senna + Colace) tablets at night.
2. If no bowel movement occurs the next morning, take two Senna-S tablets again that morning and two tablets that night.
3. Drink four to eight ounces of warm prune juice that evening. Prune juice can be a helpful part of your daily bowel management plan.
4. If no bowel movement occurs the following morning, talk with your health care provider about other methods such as milk of magnesia (MOM). If you have kidney or urinary problems, ask your doctor before using MOM.

Important Precautions
- Talk with your health care provider before taking polyethylene glycol (products such as Miralax).
- Do not use enemas or suppositories if you receive chemotherapy.
- Continue with your previous bowel management plan once you have a bowel movement.
- Talk with your health care provider before changing doses of stool softeners or laxatives.
- Discuss changes in your bowel habits with your health care provider. Bowel function is an important part of your overall health.