

# constipation

During cancer treatment constipation may need more attention than changes in your diet to resolve. Severe constipation may be a result of certain medication like pain or nausea medications. Severe constipation may also be a result of certain digestive conditions that may need medical intervention. If you experience symptoms that include severe abdominal pain, fever, nausea, vomiting and an inability to pass gas or stool you should contact your doctor right away.

For less severe constipation, the first thing you should do is talk to your doctor. They may be able to adjust your medications. Use laxatives only directed by your cancer care team. In addition to medications fiber is essential for normal bowel function. You need to make sure you incorporate the right types of fiber.

## **SOLUBLE FIBER**

Soluble fiber is soft and sticky, and absorbs water to form a gel-like substance inside the digestive system. Soluble fiber helps soften stool so it can slide through the GI tract more easily. It also binds to substances like cholesterol and sugar, preventing or slowing their absorption into the blood.

## **FOOD SOURCES OF SOLUBLE FIBER**

- Oat/Oat bran
- Dried beans and peas
- Nuts
- Barley
- Flax seed
- Fruits such as oranges and apples
- Vegetables such as carrots
- Psyllium husk

## **INSOLUBLE FIBER**

Insoluble fiber is the fiber we think of when we think of "roughage". This type of fiber does not dissolve in water. This type of fiber adds bulk to waste in the digestive system, which help may help to prevent or alleviate constipation.

## **FOOD SOURCES OF INSOLUBLE FIBER**

- Whole wheat and wheat bran
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Raw vegetables
- Beans and peas contain significant amounts of both soluble and insoluble fiber

*Foods high in insoluble fiber are best for constipation only.*

## **FIBER SUPPLEMENTS**

If it's okay with your doctors you may try adding a fiber supplement to your daily routine. They are sold at the supermarket. Look for products made with a type of fiber called inulin, or those made of wheat dextrin or psyllium. You will want to start with 1 serving and plenty of water to ensure you tolerate the product well. Water is very important when taking a fiber supplement so you want to make sure you drink at least 8oz of fluid every time you take the supplement and plenty of water throughout the day. If you add fiber without taking in adequate water you can worsen constipation. If you tolerate the product well slowly add more of the supplement and experiment when and how much works for you.



If you have any questions please contact or make an appointment with our dietitian at

**505-727-3040**