

Clinical Dialysis/Patient Care/Bowel Protocol Hemodialysis

## Bowel Protocol for Hemodialysis

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### Application:

Constipation is a common problem for people on dialysis in part due to fluid restrictions and a low potassium diet which limits the types and amount of fiber in their diets. Medications such as phosphorus binders and opioids also contribute to constipation.

**Goal:** The focus of the Bowel Protocol for Hemodialysis is to relieve and prevent constipation.

### Policy:

1. All patients on hemodialysis will be evaluated for constipation and given the appropriate recommendation. Bowel Protocol orders will be entered using ICD-10 K59.00.

### Procedure:

1. RD will interview patients on bowel movements as part of comprehensive assessments.
2. If a patient has **mild constipation or Type 3** on the Bristol Stool Form Scale start option a, b or c one at a time, if effective, continue for maintenance:
  - a. 1-3 tablespoons of cellulose fiber (Unifiber), ground flax or wheat bran daily. Start with 1 tablespoon per day, increasing by 1 tablespoon only as often as every 3 days. Do not exceed 3 tablespoons per day.
  - b. 2 prunes per day. Limit to 2 per day to avoid high potassium.
  - c. If patient has gastroparesis and/or fiber and prunes are not effective use docusate sodium (DOSS or Colace) 100mg/day increasing to up to 300mg/day. If no improvement move to number 3.

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3. If a patient has **moderate constipation or Type 2** on the Bristol Stool Form Scale recommend:
  - a. Polyethylene glycol (Miralax), 17gm powder in 4-8 ounces fluid daily. If no bowel movement after 3 days contact MD for a laxative prescription. See attached Laxative Fax sheet.
  - b. If no bowel movement after 3 days on laxative, notify MD.
  - c. Do not recommend stimulant laxatives such as senna (Senokot) or bisacodyl (Dulcolax) as they are habit forming.
4. If a patient has **severe constipation Type 1** on the Bristol Stool Form Scale or hasn't had any bowel movement in 3 days refer to MD.
  - a. RN can provide 1 dose of lactulose in the unit immediately before the patient leaves to go home. Lactulose takes effect within a couple of hours. **Do not give lactulose to a patient with dysphagia.**
  - b. To administer lactulose, patient must have a prn order for lactulose using ICD-10 K59.00.
  - c. Refer to MD regarding a long-term plan – use the Laxative Request fax
5. Maintenance
  - a. Continue fiber and/or daily stool softener
  - b. Get daily physical activity

### Tools:

Bowel Habit Screening form

Bristol Stool Form Scale

Constipation Treatment Tips brochure

Constipation tip sheet

MD laxative rx request fax