

**Northwest Kidney Centers**

(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 opioid 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. 1-2 tablespoons of cellulose fiber daily, take per package directions. Or 1-3 tablespoons ground flax or wheat bran daily, starting with 1 tablespoon per day as directed by RD, increasing by 1 tablespoon only as often as every 3 days.
  - 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 100 mg/day increasing to up to 300 mg/day. If no improvement, move to number 3.
3. If a patient has **moderate constipation or Type 2** on the Bristol Stool Form scale, recommend:
  - a. Polyethylene glycol 17gm powder in 4-8 ounces fluid daily. If no bowel movement after 3 days, notify MD. See attached laxative fax sheet. Avoid stimulant laxatives such as senna or bisacodyl as they are habit forming.

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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 difficulty swallowing.**
  - 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