

Constipation Management After Minimally Invasive Surgery

How can I avoid constipation after surgery?

- Drink plenty of caffeine-free fluid (6-8 glasses) every day (water, juice, milk, caffeine-free beverages)
- Make sure to keep your activity level up, including walking regularly
- Increase fiber in your diet (unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon)
- Take a 100 mg (1 capsule) stool softener such as Colace (docusate sodium) twice a day, especially while taking prescription pain medications.
- Stop the use of a stool softener if you develop loose bowel movements

What can I do to treat my constipation after surgery?

- Increase your stool softener dose to 2 tablets twice a day
- If this is not helping, you may use a mild laxative such as senna, milk of magnesia, magnesium citrate, polyethylene glycol (Miralax) or Dulcolax, as directed. If you have cramps or abdominal (stomach area) pain, you should contact your caregiver team.

When should I call my doctor?

Contact your provider if you:

- Have not had a bowel movement after 5 days from the day of your surgery
- Develop abdominal pain or cramping
- Have any other questions or concerns

Who should I call if I have questions?

- Call Michigan Medicine General Surgery at (734) 936-5738
- If you call after hours or on weekends, this number will direct you to the Michigan Medicine operator, who will connect you with your treatment team.

If your surgery was performed at St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea, please make sure to mention that.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Nabeel Obeid, MD

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 04/2018