



"Lighting the way with better patient care."

Anova
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Home Health • Hospice • Palliative • Home Care

HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

MANAGING BOWEL INCONTINENCE

What is Bowel Incontinence?

- Not being able to control a bowel movement from the rectum.
- Bowel incontinence has many causes. Some of these include:
 - Weakness of the anal muscle
 - Not moving around
 - Nervous system disorders
 - Mental confusion
- Other factors include:
 - Long-term use of laxatives
 - Not enough fluid intake
 - Lack of exercise
 - Hemorrhoids
 - Sedation
 - Very hard stool
- Severe constipation may lead to leakage from the rectum.

What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- Losing control of a bowel movement
- Blockage of bowel contents. Symptoms may include:
 - Nonstop oozing of loose stools
 - Loss of appetite
 - Cramping

What to report to the Hospice and Palliative Care Team?

- Color, looseness and odor of the stool
- Abdominal discomfort, cramping or bloating
- Medications and diet history
- Changes in activity level
- Skin problems of the affected area
- Patient and caregiver's thoughts

What can be done for Bowel Incontinence?

- Know the patient's bowel history. Know the usual routine – time of day, following meal, etc.
- Plan a bowel restraining program that is easy and fits into patient's lifestyle.
- Take in enough fluids and fiber if possible.
- Provide ample time and privacy during toileting.
- Keep skin clean and dry to prevent break down and odors. Avoid baby powder and cornstarch.

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- Wear loose fitting clothing to allow or air flow.
- Control odors with fresh air and room deodorizers.
- Wear protective garments.
- Avoid foods that can act as laxatives. These include caffeine, alcohol, diet soda, or artificial sweeteners.
- Talk to your nurse for ideas for more information.

