

## Tips to manage constipation after your operation

Often this is something people struggle with immediately after their bariatric operation. This is mainly due to a reduction in fluid intake (it can be difficult adapting to sipping through the day and the volume you can manage may be less), a reduction in fibre (it is difficult to eat enough fibre when you are on the progression diet) and a reduction in activity (when recovering from surgery).

Constipation can generally be managed using the following tips, if you are still struggling after implementing these please contact the bariatric team for further advice.

- Improve fluid intake; aim for between 1.5-2 litres (3-4 pints) per day sipping throughout the day. Some people find carrying around a water bottle or setting alarms can help as reminders. Remember to drink 30 minutes away from eating. You can include low fat milk or soya milk to aid your protein intake
- Including a warm drink upon waking can help stimulate the bowels
- Improve your fibre intake, in line with the texture guidance, e.g. pureed stewed fruits or pureed prunes from week 2, Weetabix from week 3, mashed vegetables from week 5
- Add ground linseeds to yoghurt, soup or cereal but ensure you drink an additional 150 ml of fluid/day with each 1 tablespoon taken
- Avoid bran as this can make constipation worse
- Increase your movement as you are able to e.g. short walks. This can really help to stimulate the bowels
- Position on toilet is really important, raising your legs e.g. on a stool will help when trying to open your bowels
- Do not delay if you feel the urge to open your bowels and give yourself plenty of time to use the toilet
- If you are still struggling to open your bowels after following the above advice, you should use a laxative. We recommend lactulose as the first choice because it is less harsh on your gut, given you have had surgery, and does not require a lot of fluid to work. This can be obtained from a pharmacist or on prescription from your GP. Please see the product information for guidance on dosage. Whilst this tastes sweet, the sugars are not absorbed so should not cause 'dumping syndrome'.

**If you have abdominal swelling, pain and vomiting and you are not passing wind, you need to seek urgent medical advice either via our bariatric team or A & E out of hours.**

Please contact either the bariatric dietitians on 01823 343394 or [bariatricsurgerydietitians@somersetft.nhs.uk](mailto:bariatricsurgerydietitians@somersetft.nhs.uk) or the bariatric specialist nurses on 01823 343561 or [BariatricSpecialistNurses@SomersetFT.nhs.uk](mailto:BariatricSpecialistNurses@SomersetFT.nhs.uk) if you continue to struggle or would like more individualised advice.

