

Chronic Constipation

Chronic Constipation (CC) affects 14% of the general population. Suboptimal toileting behaviors can interfere with the ability to empty stool from the rectum.

Toileting Tips for Patients with Constipation:

- Establish a time to try to move your bowels daily
- Sit all the way back on the toilet keeping your back fairly straight and lean forward bending from the hips, resting forearms on thighs. Raising your feet with a step stool can be helpful.
- Relax rectum feeling it bulge toward the toilet water. If you feel your rectum is raising toward your body, you are contracting rather than relaxing.
- Breathe in and slowly exhale. Belly breath by expanding your belly by gently pushing toward your belly button. Keep belly firm and expanded as you gently direct pressure down and back to the anus. A low pitched GRRR sound can assist with increasing intra-abdominal pressure
- Repeat 3–4 times. If unsuccessful, contract the pelvic floor to restore normal pelvic floor tone and get off the toilet. Avoid straining.
- To reduce excessive wiping by teaching your anus to normally contract, place hands on outer aspect of knees and resist knee movement outward, hold 5 seconds then place hands just inside of knees and resist inward movement of knees, hold 5 seconds, repeat a few times each way.

Fecal Incontinence

Fecal incontinence (FI) is reported by 8–10% of the general population. Anal sphincter weakness or injury is an important contributor to FI.

Sphincter Strengthening Tips for Patients with Fecal Incontinence: Finding your anal sphincter

- Bring knees to chest to put pelvic floor on stretch, now try tightening your anus like you don't want to pass gas or are trying to prevent loose stool from leaking.
- You will feel the anus close and lift upward as you contract, if unsuccessful check to see if you are holding your breath which will actually cause the anus to open due to increased abdominal pressure.
- When contracting the anus, it is ok if the lower abdominal muscles also contract as they are both part of the core muscles which naturally work together.
- You can facilitate anal sphincter contraction in the seated position by using your hands on the inside of the knees to resist inward movement alternating with moving the hands to the outside of the knees to resist outward movement of knees. (Jen—how many times in each position?)
- Another way to tell if you are contracting your anal sphincter is sitting on a rolled towel between your legs and slouching slightly forward so you feel pressure on the anus from the towel. When you contract properly, you will feel your anus lift up from the towel.

Strengthening exercise

- Using these techniques, perform anal sphincter strengthening exercises gradually working up 10 repetitions with 10 second hold/20 second rest 3x/day and quick flicks performing 10 repetitions x 2 second hold, 4 second rest 3x/day.