

## Important

Please read your discharge instructions for more information about incision care.

## Tip

It is important to wash your hands before starting the dressing change and again after you are finished.

## Tip

- Laxatives and stool softeners can be bought at most local grocery stores, drugstores and large retailers.
- Read the label carefully and follow package instructions. Talk with your pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Stop taking a laxative or stool softener when you stop taking opioid medicines.

## How do you take care of your incision and change the dressing?

- You should look at your incision every day and keep it clean while it heals.
- Do not put any creams, salves or ointments on the area.
- Your dressing will likely be removed before you leave the hospital. If you are sent home with a dressing, change it as directed by your surgeon.
- Do not take a tub bath until your surgeon says it is OK. (This also includes swimming in pools or lakes and using hot tubs.)

## How do you manage constipation after surgery?

Constipation is common after surgery, especially while you are taking pain medicine and your activity level is decreased.

### How to prevent constipation

- Drink six to eight 8-ounce glasses of liquids each day. Caffeine or alcohol can make constipation worse.
- Eat foods with plenty of fiber including whole-grain bread, bran cereals, and fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Be as active as you can each day.
- Try to have a bowel movement when you feel the urge. Do not ignore the urge. Try to set aside some time after breakfast or dinner to sit on the toilet.

### Use of constipation medicines

You may need to take a laxative to prevent constipation as long as you are taking prescription pain medicine. Common products include:

- **stimulant laxatives.** These cause the colon to have a bowel movement. This is the best choice when your constipation is caused by a prescription pain medicine. Examples include senna (Senokot®), bisacodyl (Dulcolax®, Correctol®) and polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®). Follow package instructions.
- **stool softeners.** These add moisture to the stools to make the stool softer and easier to pass. These may not be enough to prevent constipation while you are taking a prescription pain medicine. An example is docusate (Colace®). Follow package instructions.