Treatment of Constipation After Surgery

Constipation is very common after surgery. Signs of constipation can include:
• Less frequent bowel movements
• Hard stools
• Difficulty or straining during a bowel movement
• Nausea, bloating, abdominal cramping or pain

What can you do about constipation?
Constipation often brings hard, dry stools. This is why we suggest a medication called Senokot-S that contains both a stool softener (to moisten the stool so it is softer) and a laxative (to promote movement in the intestinal tract and bowel).

You can buy this medication without a prescription. Choose the generic tablets. They will work just as well as the name brand and can save you money.

How should you take Senokot-S?
• Follow the package directions.
• Take two tablets every day at bedtime.
• If you do not have a bowel movement in 24 hours, or your bowel movement is hard and painful, you may take two tablets twice a day – in the morning and at bedtime.
• Call your surgeon if you continue to have problems with constipation
• Stop taking this medication if your stools are loose.

What else should I do for constipation?
While taking Senokot-S, it is still important to use natural measures to help prevent or reduce constipation.

• Drink plenty of fluids – at least eight glasses of water a day. Try to avoid caffeine and alcohol as these can have a dehydrating effect.

• Eat foods high in fiber, such as bran, whole-grain breads and pastas, beans, fresh fruits and some raw vegetables. These foods should be increased slowly in your diet, in order to avoid abdominal cramping.

• Exercise if you are able, even if it is just walking around the house. Any movement helps you to have a bowel movement.

• Drink a hot, non-caffeinated beverage one-half hour before you usually have a bowel movement. Hot liquids often increase bowel activity.

If problems with constipation continue even with the above suggestions, be sure to contact your surgeon.