Bowel Care after a Brain Injury

Possible bowel problems after a brain injury

- Incontinence or loss of control of bowel movement. Person may:
  - Not be able to control bowel movements (BM).
  - Not be able to walk to or transfer onto a toilet.
  - Not be able to let someone know of the need to have a bowel movement.
  - Be confused.
- Diarrhea or liquid bowel movements.
- Constipation or hard bowel movements.

What you can do to correct your bowel problems

Incontinence

- Keep a record of all bowel movements. Record the following:
  - When you have a bowel movement.
  - How large or small is the bowel movement?
  - Was it liquid, soft or hard?
  - Was it accidental or was it planned?
  - Medicines used (suppository or pill)
Watch for changes that may show the need to have BM:
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Trying to get out of bed

Use equipment that may help you control your bowel movements:
- Bed pan
- Bedside commode
- Adult diapers

Sit on the toilet for a few minutes, 20-30 minutes after you eat a meal
Try using a rectal suppository such as glycerine or dulcolax
Use gentle rectal stimulation, if needed. Your nurse will show you how to do this.

Do your bowel program at the same time and place.

**Diarrhea**
- Do not eat irritating foods such as milk, fruit juice, raw fruits, vegetables, and beans.
- Think about medicines you are taking that could cause diarrhea, such as antibiotics.

**Constipation**
- Eat foods high in fiber such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Increase your fluid intake.
- Drink prune juice daily.
- Be active.
- Take medicines that soften and add bulk to your bowel movements.
- Think about medicines that could cause constipation, such as pain pills, diuretics, anti-seizure drugs.

Talk with your doctor if these ideas do not help your diarrhea, constipation or incontinence.