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PALLIATIVE CARE AGED CARE EVIDENCE

Tips for Careworkers:
Constipation

What it is: Constipation occurs when there is limited or difficult passing of hard, dry stools (faeces).

Why it matters: Constipation is common in older adults. However, it is more common in older people with palliative care needs and as a person comes to the end of their life.

Constipation can lead to a person not eating, feeling sick, having pain, or becoming weaker and more unwell. Pain may be severe. Careworkers are likely to notice these changes and can also actively support the older person to manage concerns with constipation.

What I need to know: The Bristol Stool Chart can be used to decide if a person's stool is normal or not.

Food with increased fluid and fibre may be useful.

Consider the person's dignity when helping with toileting.

Do To know what is usual, ask the person or their family how often they usually pass a stool.

Do Make sure that it is easy and safe for a person to use the toilet – this can mean good lighting, safe bed height, toilet height, and clothing that is easy to wear and remove.

Do Observe toileting patterns of a person and support them to go to the toilet. Report to nursing/supervisory staff any change in toileting pattern, discomfort, straining, or leakages. Document this accurately in care notes.

Name:

My reflections:

When attending to a person's concerns with constipation what should I consider?

What can I do to make it easier for the older person to use the toilet?

My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice Tip Sheets:

Faecal Incontinence

Nutrition and Hydration

Opioid Analgesics

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit
palliaged.com.au/Practice-Centre/For-Careworkers

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