



## Important information about Bowel Management:

Decreased mobility, certain medications, laxative dependency, and diseases affecting the bowel put **some** individuals at an increased risk for constipation, fecal impaction and bowel obstructions. These conditions can cause pain, increased seizure activity, nausea, bowel perforation and possibly death. Developing and implementing a bowel management program is vital for individuals at risk for these conditions.

### INDIVIDUALIZED EVALUATION

**NOT EVERYONE NEEDS A BOWEL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.** A thorough history of the individual's bowel pattern, dietary intake, and medications, along with a physical examination will help health care professionals to identify individuals who may be at risk for developing constipation and who may consequently require a bowel management program.

For individuals who have been determined by a health care professional to need a bowel management program, the following are components of an effective program:

1. Natural measures can help to prevent episodes of constipation:
  - Maintaining a well-balanced diet
  - Drinking fluids
  - Treating underlying disorders
  - Increasing exercise and mobility
2. Physicians' orders for bowel management medications must identify the drug, the dose, the route, the frequency and the time of administration. The regimen may need to specify steps to be taken if the medication is not effective.



3. In order to comply with physicians' orders for medications, accurate tracking of individuals' bowel movements is critical. For individuals with a bowel management program, accurate monitoring and recording of bowel status must be maintained 24 hours a day. Adequate communication among service providers is essential.
4. Once a PRN (as needed) medication is given, there must be adequate follow up to evaluate the effectiveness of the medication. If the medication is ineffective, staff must know what further steps to take.
5. As with any intervention, an individual's bowel management program must be periodically reviewed for effectiveness by a health care professional and changed if needed.

**IF THE INDIVIDUAL IS HAVING ABDOMINAL PAIN, LOOSE STOOLS, DISTENSION OF THE ABDOMEN, VOMITING OR FEVER, A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE CONTACTED TO ASSESS THE PERSON, THESE SYMPTOMS MAY INDICATE A SERIOUS MEDICAL PROBLEM.**



**Statewide Committee on Incident Review (SCIR)**

NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities  
44 Holland Avenue  
Albany, NY 12229

[scir.opwdd@opwdd.ny.gov](mailto:scir.opwdd@opwdd.ny.gov)

OPWDD Information Line: 1-866-946-9733