

Constipation
4/23/17

Constipation can be a hard and painful topic for the patient and physician, both. Help yourself ease things along by using this structured approach to ruling out medical illness and appropriately treating constipation in the ED, if indicated.

First, consider WHY the patient is constipated.
Most reasons can be ruled out by history, labs, or examination.

5 categories of medical problems to consider in the setting of constipation:

- 1) Bad lifestyle:
 - a. ask about fiber, water, exercise
- 2) Medications:
 - a. ask about opiates
- 3) Endocrine / Electrolytes:
 - a. order thyroid panel or calcium
- 4) Bowel obstruction:
 - a. ask about colonoscopy, unexplained weight loss, abdominal surgeries
- 5) Rectal problems:
 - a. **Rectal exam!** Check for hemorrhoids, anal fissures, masses, fecal impaction

NOW STOP! Refocus here...

5 Ways to treat constipation (how to help someone have a good poop):

- 1) Fiber – for structure
 - a. Tx: **Metamucil**
- 2) Water – for girth
 - a. Tx: **Lactulose, Miralax** (Polyethylene glycol) – osmotic hydration
- 3) Fat – for girth
 - a. Tx: **Colace**
- 4) Stimulate intestines
 - a. Tx: **Senna**
- 5) Suppositories and enemas – stimulate rectum to cause reflex bowel movement
 - a. Tx: **Glycerine**
 - b. Tx: **Docolax**
 - c. Tx: **Fleet enemas**