

Constipation in the Elderly

Drugs associated with Constipation:

- 1) **Analgesics**
 - a. NSAIDs
 - i. Ibuprofen
- 2) **Anticholinergics**
 - a. Antispasmodics
 - i. Loperamide
 - b. Tricyclic Antidepressants
 - i. Amitriptyline > Nortriptyline
 - c. Antipsychotics
 - i. Chlorpromazine
- 3) **Cation containing compounds**
 - a. Iron supplements
 - b. Aluminum (antacids, sucralfate)
 - c. Calcium (antacids)
- 4) **Opiates**
 - a. Morphine
 - b. Hydrocodone
 - c. Oxycodone
- 5) **Calcium channel blockers**
 - a. Specifically Verapamil
- 6) **Diuretics**
 - a. Hydrochlorothiazide
 - b. Furosemide
- 7) **5HT3 antagonists**
 - a. Ondansetron (Zofran)
- 8) **Vinca alkaloids**
 - a. Vincristine

Non-pharmacologic factors:

- 1) **Diet** - Increase fiber and water intake
- 2) **Exercise** - increased exercise will help prevent constipation

Refer to Emergency Department if any of the following symptoms present:

- 1) Blood in stool
- 2) Extreme abdominal pain
- 3) Duration of greater than 1 week
- 4) N/V
- 5) Weight Loss

Drugs for the treatment of constipation:

- 1) **Bulk laxative – Psyllium**
 - a. Can be used for the prevention of Constipation
 - b. Very important to drink at least 8 glasses of water per day, could produce a bowel obstruction if water intake is insufficient
 - c. Safe for elderly patients
- 2) **Emollient – Docusate sodium**
 - a. Can be used for the prevention of Constipation
 - b. Good choice for elderly patients
- 3) **Osmotic laxative – PEG, Glycerin (suppository), Miralax, Sorbitol, Lactulose**
 - a. Used for both acute and chronic
 - b. Safe for elderly long term
 - c. Not absorbed systemically
- 4) **Stimulant laxative – Bisacodyl, Senna, Cascara**
 - a. Good for acute constipation, but not for prevention
 - b. Not recommended in the elderly population unless they are using long term narcotics
- 5) **Saline laxative – Magnesium Citrate, Sodium Phosphate, Milk of Magnesia**
 - a. For acute constipation
 - b. Not safe for elderly long term, cause electrolyte imbalances
 - c. Don't give to heart failure or renal insufficiency patients
 - d. Can cause gas and cramping
- 6) **Lubricant – Mineral Oil (oral)**
 - a. Risk for aspiration pneumonia – Never give to elderly patient