

WRHA Palliative Care Program Constipation Assessment & Management Algorithm

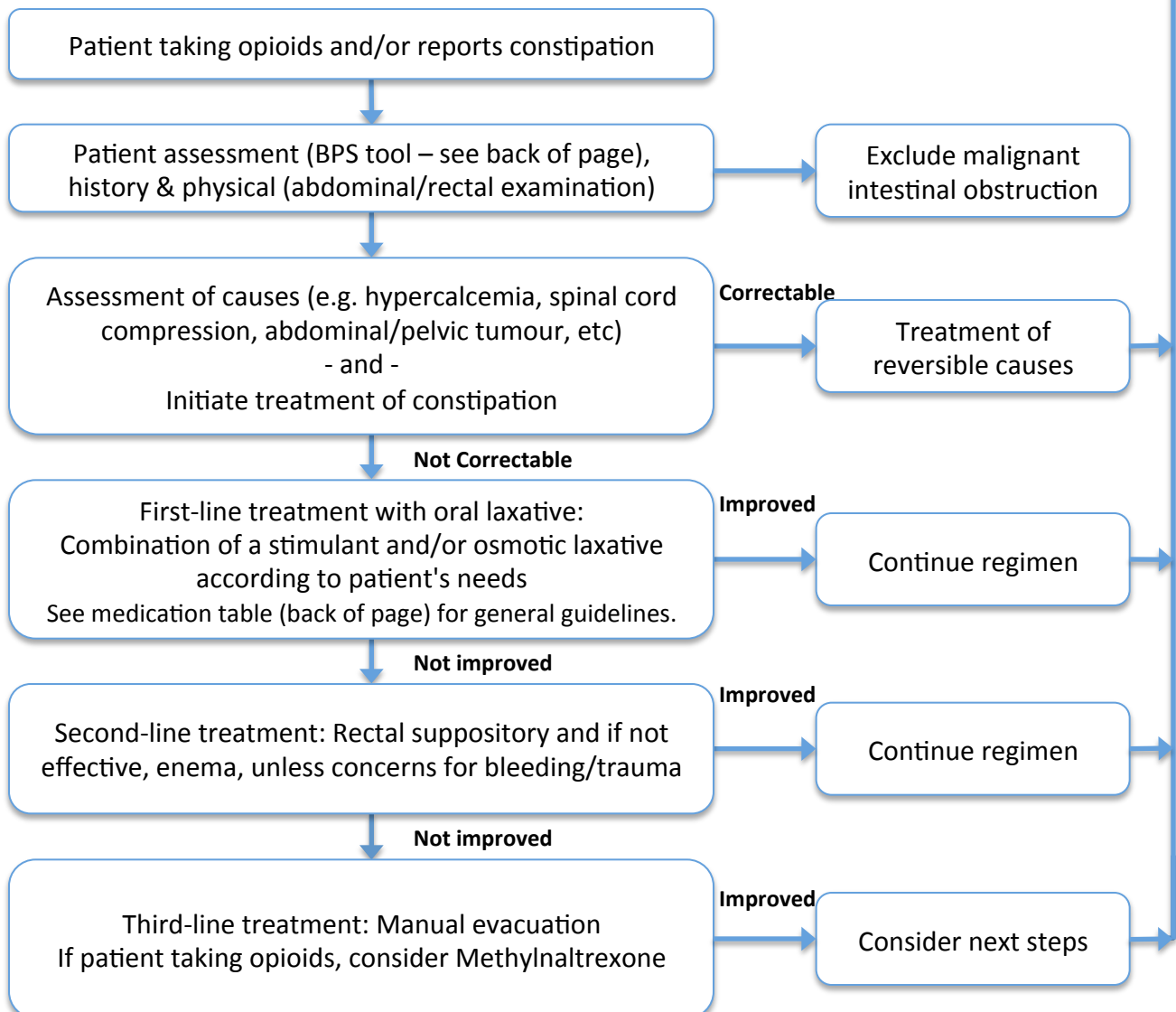
Prevention:

- Anticipate constipating effects of pharmacological agents such as opioids and prescribe laxative prophylactically (e.g., daily senna glycosides)
- Monitor bowel pattern and patient satisfaction with bowel function
- Monitor risk factors for constipation


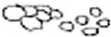
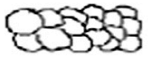
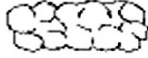
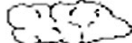
Patient/family education and preventative strategies:

- Increase fluid intake and natural agents found effective by patient (e.g. prunes/juice)
- Encourage mobility/activity if possible
- Avoid insoluble fibre (bulk-forming agents, e.g. psyllium) if limited fluid intake/activity
- Ensure privacy, comfort, and sitting position to allow a patient to defecate normally

Guidelines for Care



Victoria Bowel Performance Scale (BPS)

- 4	- 3	- 2	- 1	BPS Score 0
← Constipation			Normal	
				Characteristics
Impacted or Obstructed +/- small leakage 	Formed Hard with pellets 	Formed Hard 	Formed Solid 	Formed Semi-solid 
				Pattern
No stool produced	Delayed ≥ 3 days	Delayed ≥ 3 days	Patient's Usual	Patient's Usual
				Control
Unable to defecate despite maximum effort or straining	Major effort or straining required to defecate	Moderate effort or straining required to defecate	Minimal or no effort required to defecate	Minimal or no effort to defecate

Bowel Performance Scale (BPS) (originally published in the J of Pain & Symptom Management 2007)
Adapted from Librach et al (2010). J of Pain & Symptom Management, 40: 761-773. © Victoria Hospice Society, 2009.

Medication Table – General Guidelines for Bowel Care

Laxative	Usual Dose range	Comments
Stimulant laxatives		
Senna glycosides (e.g. Senokot®)	8.6 – 68.8mg	Recommended as 1 st line Consensus Recommendation
Bisacodyl (e.g. Dulcolax®)	1-8 tabs/day	
Osmotic laxatives		
Lactulose	15-30 ml Daily – QID	Recommended as 1 st line Level 1 evidence
Polyethylene glycol (PEG) 3350 (e.g. RestoraLAX®, LAX-A-DAY®)	17-34g Daily - TID	
Suppositories		
Bisacodyl (e.g. Dulcolax®) Glycerin	Use together Q72h	
Enemas		
Phosphate (e.g. Fleet®)	Max 1 in 24H	Risk of electrolyte disturbance with phosphate/saline Consensus Recommendation
Saline		
Mineral Oil	Q72H prn	
Selective Opioid Receptor Blocker		
Methylnaltrexone (e.g. Relistor®)	8 – 12 mg Subcut	For refractory Opioid Induced Constipation Level 1 evidence
Stool Softeners		
Docusate sodium (e.g. Colace®)	100 – 400 mg Daily	Do not use without stimulant laxative
Fibre		
Psyllium		Not Recommended in Palliative Care