1 All patients on opioids (except those with malabsorption or an ileostomy) require regular aperients
2 Use CDHB Bowel Motion Chart (C280030) to record bowels daily (an adequate bowel motion is generally Types 3, 4 or 5 on the BRISTOL STOOL FORM scale)
3 Do not use this flow chart if the patient is in bowel obstruction - refer to bowel obstruction section of the Palliative Care Guidelines
4 Lactulose and bulking agents eg Metamucil™ are not recommended, and Kiwi Crush™ is generally not effective alone. Neither should be commenced as initial treatments in this context
5 For doses and times to effect see Palliative Care Guidelines
6 If patient develops loose bowel motions, withhold one dose of laxatives. Be vigilant for overflow diarrhoea
7 Do not perform a PR or insert suppositories in patients who are neutropenic without authorisation

Every day without a bowel motion requires a formal assessment

**DAY 1**

**BOWEL NOT OPEN - ON OPIOIDS**

- Consider stopping medications that exacerbate constipation eg: ondansetron, anticholinergics
- Check reversible causes eg: hypercalcaemia and dehydration
- Increase dose of Laxsol™ (3 tabs bd regularly is maximum dose)
- Bowels not open

**DAY 2**

- Full Rectum
  - Perform PR Examination
- Empty Rectum
  - Bowels not open
  - Lax-Sachets™ 2 sachets stat plus 2 more in 2 hours

**DAY 3**

- Bowel obstruction confirmed
- Perform Abdo Xray to exclude bowel obstruction
- Bowel obstruction excluded
  - Faecal loading may be evident although unlikely to be reported
  - Repeat PR Examination
  - Empty Rectum
  - Lax-Sachets™ 2 sachets qid for 2-5 days. Withhold Laxsol™ if difficulty tolerating Lax-Sachets™ consider PicoPrep™ 1 stat
  - Encourage fluid intake (may need IV fluids)
  - Once bowels open refer to Palliative Care Guidelines for best oral laxative option (stimulant plus softener)

**DAY 4**

- Repeat PR Examination and treat accordingly
- If bowel not open, go back to ‘Day 3’ and consider daily Fleet mineral oil enema if rectum is empty. Specialist palliative care advice may be needed.

Approved by Clinical Director,
Palliative Care Service
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Laxsol™ = Docusate sodium and sennosides
Lax-Sachets™ = Macrogol and electrolyte
PicoPrep™ = Sodium Picosulfate Powder for Oral Solution