



TITLE: Routine Bowel Care for Patients in Long-Term or Palliative Care: Guidelines

DATE: 07 December 2015

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the guidelines for routine bowel care of long-term care seniors and palliative care residents?

KEY FINDINGS

Two evidence-based guidelines were identified regarding routine bowel care of long-term care seniors and palliative care residents.

METHODS

A limited literature search was conducted on key resources including PubMed, The Cochrane Library, University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) databases, Canadian and major international health technology agencies, as well as a focused Internet search. Methodological filters were applied to limit retrieval to health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses and guidelines. The results of a second focused search (with main concepts appearing in the title or subject heading) were also included. Where possible, retrieval was limited to the human population. The search was also limited to English language documents published between January 1, 2008 and November 19, 2015. Internet links were provided, where available.

The summary of findings was prepared from the abstracts of the relevant information. Please note that data contained in abstracts may not always be an accurate reflection of the data contained within the full article.

SELECTION CRITERIA

One reviewer screened citations and selected studies based on the inclusion criteria presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Selection Criteria

Population	Patients residing in long-term or palliative care facilities
Intervention	Routine bowel care (pharmacological and non-pharmacological)
Comparator	No comparator
Outcomes	Guidelines and best practice
Study Designs	Health technology assessments, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, evidence-based guidelines

RESULTS

Rapid Response reports are organized so that the higher quality evidence is presented first. Therefore, health technology assessment reports, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses are presented first. These are followed by evidence-based guidelines.

Two evidence-based guidelines were identified regarding routine bowel care of long-term care seniors and palliative care residents. No relevant health technology assessments, systematic reviews, or meta-analyses were identified.

Additional references of potential interest are provided in the appendix.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

One guideline was identified regarding bowel care for patients in palliative care.¹ Bowel care is part of a continuous process. The guideline recommends that patients and caregivers be adequately educated in non-drug interventions for constipation prevention. Medications should be reviewed and laxatives should be prescribed prophylactically where appropriate. All patients who receive opioids should receive a laxative and be educated regarding bowel care. Fibre and fluids may not be an appropriate method of constipation prevention for patients in palliative care. When providing toileting for palliative patients, privacy and dignity of the patient should be considered. There is a lack of evidence to recommend the use of one pharmacological therapy over another. A softening and a stimulating agent may need to be prescribed together and the choice of laxative should be guided by the patient's situation and preferences. Where there is no difference in tolerability or effectiveness, the lowest cost option should be used.¹

One guideline was identified regarding the prevention of constipation in long-term care.² The guideline recommends many steps involved in bowel care routine, including:

- Assessment of new patients' habits and routines to identify potential triggers for constipation (e.g., medications, fluid and fibre intake, functional abilities, history of medical or surgical issues related to constipation)
- "Conduct a physical assessment of the abdomen and rectum"
- Identify the patient's normal bowel patterns
- Ensure fluid intake is between 1500-2000 mL per day
- Dietary fibre intake should be maintained between 21 and 25 grams per day
- Regular toileting habits should be encouraged and facilitated
- Defecation should be facilitated for those individuals having trouble by using a squat position
- Daily walking should be encouraged for those with full or limited mobility who are able
- Exercises are recommended for those residents unable to leave their bed (pelvic tilt, low trunk rotation, and single leg lifts).

REFERENCES SUMMARIZED

Health Technology Assessments

No literature identified.

Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

No literature identified.

Guidelines and Recommendations

1. Management of constipation in adult patients receiving palliative care [Internet]. Dublin: Department of Health, Ireland; 2015 Nov. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. (National clinical guideline no. 10). Available from: <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Mgmt-of-Constipation-Guideline.pdf>
See: 2.4 Prevention, pages 28-29
2.5 Non-Pharmacological Management, pages 29-31
2.6 Pharmacological Management, pages 31-41
2. Prevention of constipation in the older adult population. Supplement [Internet]. rev. 2011. Toronto: Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO); 2005 Mar. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. (Nursing best practice guideline). Available from: http://rnao.ca/sites/rnao-ca/files/Prevention_of_Constipation_in_the_Older_Adult_Population.pdf

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APPENDIX – FURTHER INFORMATION:

Previous CADTH Reports

3. Routine bowel care for long term care: guidelines [Internet]. Ottawa: Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH); 2007 Nov 28. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. (Health Technology Inquiry Service (HTIS)). Available from: <https://www.cadth.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/htis/Routine%20Bowel%20Care%20for%20Long%20Term%20Care%20Guidelines.pdf>

Clinical Practice Guidelines – Methodology Not Specified

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See: Bowel Management, pages 17-19
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See: D. Management
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10. Continence care and bowel management program. Policy, procedures and training package [Internet]. Woodbridge (ON): Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes & Services for Seniors; 2010 Dec 22. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. Available from: <https://www.oanhss.org/oanhssdocs/MembersOnly/Full%20Members%20Only%20Pages/>

[GovernmentAndMediaRelations/LTC%20Homes%20Act/Continece_Care_and_Bowel_Management_PP_Training_Package.pdf](#)

11. Bowel management decision-making framework for nurses and care staff caring for people with advanced dementia. Train the trainer manual for RACF educators [Internet]. Penrith, Australia: Western Sydney University; 2009. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. Available from: http://www.uws.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/76245/Bowel_Management_Train_the_Trainer.pdf
12. Clinical care guidelines. Constipation guidelines [Internet]. Worcester, United Kingdom: St. Richard's Hospice; 2009. [cited 2015 Dec 3]. Available from: http://virtualhospice.ca/Assets/Constipation%20Guideline_with%20appendices_St%20Richard%27s%20Hospice.%20pdf_20100505160131.pdf

Non-Randomized Studies

13. Morgan C, Endozoa N, Paradiso C, McNamara M, McGuire M. Enhanced toileting program decreases incontinence in long term care. *Jt Comm J Qual Patient Saf.* 2008 Apr;34(4):206-8.
[PubMed: PM18468358](#)
14. Sturtzel B, Elmadfa I. Intervention with dietary fiber to treat constipation and reduce laxative use in residents of nursing homes. *Ann Nutr Metab.* 2008;52 Suppl 1:54-6.
[PubMed: PM18382081](#)

Review Articles

15. Clemens KE, Faust M, Jaspers B, Mikus G. Pharmacological treatment of constipation in palliative care. *Curr Opin Support Palliat Care.* 2013 Jun;7(2):183-91.
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[PubMed: PM21775408](#)
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Additional References

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[PubMed: PM18794004](#)