

# Constipation Pathway

**Constipation**  
Requires  $\geq 2$  or more of the following features for at least 12 weeks

1.  $\leq 3$  bowel movements a week
2. Straining
3. Hard lump stool
4. Sensation of incomplete evacuation
5. Sensation of anal rectal blockage
6. Digital evacuation in  $> 25\%$  of bowel movements

**Red Flag Symptoms**

- Persistent unexplained change in bowel habits for 3 months
- Rectal bleeding
- Unexplained weight loss
- New symptoms of wind and mucus
- Anaemia
- Family history of bowel cancer

- Referral to urgent suspected cancer pathway
- To be seen within 2 weeks

**One-stop Clinic**

- Colonoscopy
- Further investigations

**Primary Measures**

- Identify contributory factors
- Patient education
- Correct toilet positioning
- Regulate bowel habit – regular toileting about 30 minutes after a meal
- Modify diet – increasing or decreasing fibre, 5 fruit and vegetables a day, ensure fluid intake of  $1 \frac{1}{2}$  litres mixed fluid
- Laxatives (E.g. movicol / lactulose / macrogol / glycerol suppository)
- Anti-diarrhoeal drugs for patients with loose stool once impaction has been ruled out
- Review in 6 weeks intervals
- If  $>2$  laxatives tried for 4 months - refer to secondary care

**Referral to colorectal nurse**

**Specialist Bowel Dysfunction Triage Clinic**

- Anal manometry
- Biofeedback
- Specialised exercises
- Dietary and lifestyle changes
- Manipulation of medication
- Use of medication
- Further investigations
  - Colonoscopy
  - Transit studies
  - Proctogram

**Colorectal MDT  
Joint pelvic floor clinic**

**Additional problems:**

- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Dementia
- Learning disability
- Resident in care home
- Poor mobility

**Referral to community continence nurse specialist**