

# WRHA Palliative Care Program Constipation Assessment & Management Algorithm

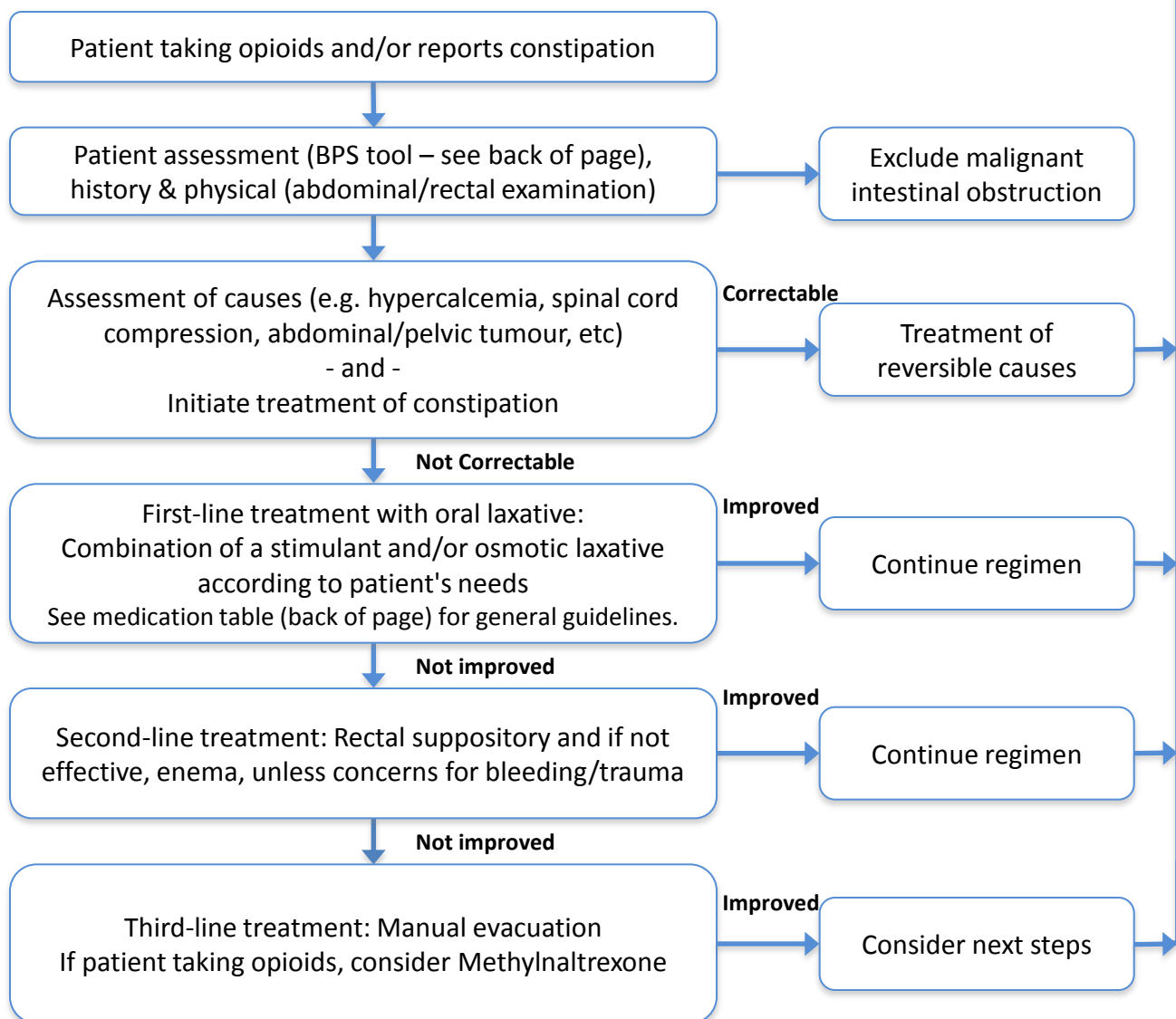
## Prevention:

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


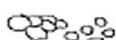

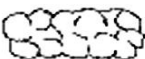
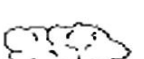
## Patient/family education and preventative strategies:

- 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	
<b>Impacted or Obstructed +/- small leakage</b> 	<b>Formed Hard with pellets</b> 	<b>Formed Hard</b> 	<b>Formed Solid</b> 	<b>Characteristics</b>
				<b>Formed Semi-solid</b> 
<b>No stool produced</b>	<b>Delayed ≥ 3 days</b>	<b>Delayed ≥ 3 days</b>	<b>Patient's Usual</b>	<b>Pattern</b>
				<b>Patient's Usual</b>
<b>Unable to defecate despite maximum effort or straining</b>	<b>Major effort or straining required to defecate</b>	<b>Moderate effort or straining required to defecate</b>	<b>Minimal or no effort required to defecate</b>	<b>Control</b>
				<b>Minimal or no effort to defecate</b>

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
<b>Stimulant laxatives</b>		
Senna glycosides (ex: Senokot®)	8.6 – 68.8mg 1-8 tabs/day	Recommended as 1 <sup>st</sup> line
<b>Osmotic laxatives</b>		
Lactulose	15-30 ml OD – QID	
PEG 3350 (MiraLAX®, LaxADay™)	17-34g OD - TID	Recommended as 1 <sup>st</sup> line
<b>Suppositories</b>		
Bisacodyl, Glycerin	Give together Q72h	
<b>Enemas</b>		
Phosphate	Max 1 in 24H	Risk of electrolyte disturbance with phosphate/saline
Saline		
Mineral Oil	Q72H prn	
<b>Selective Opioid Receptor Blocker</b>		
Methylnaltrexone	8 – 12 mg Subcut	For refractory Opioid Induced Constipation
<b>Stool Softeners</b>		
Docusate	100 – 200 mg OD	Do not use without stimulant laxative
<b>Fibre</b>		
Psyllium		Not Recommended in Palliative Care