

### **Preventing/Treating Constipation with Use of Opioid Pain Medications**

Pain medications prescribed after surgery like oxycodone/acetaminophen (Percocet, etc.) and hydrocodone/acetaminophen (Vicodin, Norco, Lortab, etc.) are opioids. These medications will slow down the bowel and can cause constipation. It is easier to prevent constipation, than it is to treat it.

#### **Preventing Constipation**

- Drink at least 64 oz. of fluid daily.
- Maintain physical activity within required restrictions. Walking is great if you are not restricted from it.
- Eat plenty of fiber in your diet for prevention of constipation.
- ***We highly recommend taking an over-the-counter stool softener like docusate sodium 100 mg by mouth once or twice daily while you are taking opioid pain medications.***

#### **Managing Constipation**

***If Prevention has not been successful, this is a recommended first step:***

Peri-Colace or Senokot-S, 2 tablets by mouth twice daily (hold for loose stools)

***If this is not effective you may try the following second step:***

Milk of Magnesia 30 mL by mouth twice daily as needed **OR** Miralax by mouth daily **OR** Bisacodyl by mouth once daily

***If this is not effective you may try the following third step:***

Fleets enema once a day as needed **OR** Magnesium citrate 150-300 mL by mouth once a day as needed

\*These medications are available without a prescription