

Digestive Health Self Management Plan

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get soluble and insoluble fiber | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat on schedule. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limit foods high in fat. | <input type="checkbox"/> Stay hydrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Include probiotics in your diet unless otherwise directed by your health care provider | <input type="checkbox"/> Manage Stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose lean meats | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol and caffeine |

Green Flags — All Clear



If you have:

- No abdominal pain or discomfort
- Have regular bowel movements
- Digestive issues managed with medications and/or diet.

What this means ...

- Good work!
- Your symptoms are under control

Keep up the good work!

Yellow Flags — Caution



If you have:

- Problems with belching
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Fatigue/weakness
- Dark, tarry stools, or noticeable blood in your stool
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling of nausea
- Unexplained weight loss
- Vomiting
- Fever of 102 or higher
- Stomach cramps that do not go away

What this means ...

- You may need follow-up by your PCP
- Your medication may need to be adjusted.
- The medication may be effecting your digestive system

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags — Stop and Think



If you:

- Rectal bleeding or blood in your stool
- Persistent abdominal discomfort, such as cramps, gas, or pain.
- A feeling that your bowel doesn't empty completely
- Weakness or fatigue
- Unexplained weight loss
- A change in your bowel habits—like diarrhea or constipation—or a change in the consistency of your stool.
- Do not have a bowel movement, particularly when taking a narcotic for three or more days

You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

If possible, notify your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: CALL 9-1-1

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 911. Emergency!

Digestive Health: Fast Facts

- Food is essential to your good health.
- Digestion starts in the mouth, not in the stomach. Did you know that your salivary glands produce approximately 1.7 liters of saliva each day?
- Eating processed foods is not helpful for your digestive system, since we need to rely on the natural enzymes in food to help us have good digestion. Enzyme rich foods are fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds.
- Your digestive system must break down protein, carbohydrates, and fats in order to use the nutrients to build and nourish cells and to provide energy.
- Your digestive health can change over your lifestyle, depending upon your overall habits, your genetics, and your age.
- It is important to have a regular bowel movement, since your body needs to eliminate all the toxins and byproducts.
- Your digestive system can be disrupted by disease, diet, and emotional stress and digestive system disorders develop when there is a problem in the normal functioning of digestion.
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Crohn's disease, intestinal distress, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), dyspepsia, colitis, spastic bowel, spastic colon, intestinal gas, irritable colon, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), nausea, heartburn, abdominal cramps, abdominal pain, stomach ache, constipation, loss of appetite, and others are just some of the many health related problems connected with your digestive system.



What can you do?

- Follow your health care providers or dietician's dietary recommendations, which includes eating a balanced diet. Eating small, frequent meals as recommended can also be helpful.
- Get both insoluble and soluble fiber, unless otherwise directed by your health care provider. Insoluble fiber includes wheat bran, vegetables, and whole grains; soluble fiber is from oat bran, nuts, seeds, and legumes.
- Know what foods/beverages trigger your digestive problem, e.g. coffee, dairy, or carbonated beverages.
- Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Reduce intake of fried, fattening foods.
- Stay hydrated as water in your digestive system helps dissolve fats and soluble fiber, making them pass more easily.
- Exercise safely (e.g., walking or, if safe, going up and down stairs) on a regular basis.
- If you smoke, quit.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Manage stress as this can cause a digestive flare-up

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County— plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County.

For more information, call 1-844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org



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