

## CONSTIPATION?

Compiled by Charles (Chuck) Maack, Prostate Cancer Advocate/Activist

Disclaimer: Please recognize that I am not a Medical Doctor. I have been an avid student researching and studying prostate cancer as a survivor and continuing patient since 1992. I have dedicated my retirement years to continued research and study in order to serve as an advocate for prostate cancer awareness, and, from a activist patient's viewpoint, to help patients, caregivers, and others interested develop an understanding of prostate cancer, its treatment options, and the treatment of the side effects that often accompany treatment. Readers of this paper must understand that the comments or recommendations I make are not intended to be the procedure to blindly follow; rather, they are to be reviewed as my opinion, then used for further personal research, study, and subsequent discussion with the medical professional/physician providing prostate cancer care.

What occurs for those of us experiencing continuing constipation is likely inadequate peristalsis; that automatic pushing you would normally feel, those automatic contractions that happen during a bowel movement. Peristalsis moves food through the large intestine, so if you are deficient in calcium and/or magnesium, this function may slow or stop, causing constipation.

This is often a problem when having to take medications that somewhat "block" our normal capabilities and can cause exceptional discomfort.

One patient prescribed several medications necessary for advanced prostate cancer that appeared to be the cause of constipation provided the following recommended by his oncology nurse and termed the "Brown Bomber" (what a visual!):

- (1) Every day I take two "Senna Plus" tablets four times a day (2 upon waking, 2 with lunch, 2 with supper, and 2 at bedtime), and
- (2) whenever I go two or more days without a respectable bowel movement, I drink, normally in and around when I'm having my normal morning coffee, a mixture of three equal parts of:
  - 4 tablespoons of Milk of Magnesia
  - 4 tablespoons of coffee (nurse says doing regular or decaf is okay; I always do regular)
  - 4 tablespoons of prune juice.....all stirred together, which ends up not tasting all that bad, surprisingly enough. In every case so far, knock on wood!, by the second evening I have always had a good bowel movement. [I would have taken a dose on the second day as well as that one on the first day.]

In my own case, I am prescribed the stool softener Colace 100mg two in morning two at bedtime, and if I still am constipated I add to that the over-the-counter laxative that I purchase at Walgreens or Krogers, Senna-S (Docusate Sodium 50mg, Sennosides 8.6mg), and take just one tablet in the morning to see if that is enough, and if not add another mid-day. When I tried larger doses of Senna, it caused diarrhea so had to back down to the 1 then another sequence.

If still experiencing constipation over a couple days despite this protocol, the dose of Senna could be increased or give the 4/4/4 tablespoon of Milk of Magnesia, prune juice, coffee combination a try until experiencing the “Brown Bomber.” I expect that if you don’t drink coffee, hot tea will work just as well.

It would then likely be prudent to continue the Colace (if you prefer included) and experiment with the dosage of Senna that can provide you daily relief without diarrhea.