



### **Bowel Obstruction – High Risk**

A bowel obstruction is a serious condition that happens when food or waste cannot move through the bowel. This obstruction can be considered complete or partial and can occur in the small intestine or large intestine. A bowel obstruction may be due to a mechanical cause (something is in the way) or an ileus - a condition where the bowel does not work correctly; however there is no structural problem causing it. Individuals with history of prior bowel obstruction, PICA, chronic constipation or combinations of risk factors may be at **high risk** for a bowel obstruction.

#### ***Causes/risks of bowel obstruction include but are not limited to:***

- Impacted stool
- Hernias
- Tumors
- Decreased mobility
- Twisting of the intestines
- History of abdominal surgery
- Foreign bodies (items that are swallowed and block the intestines)
- Intestinal infections
- Medications (especially narcotics or psychotropic medications).

#### ***Symptoms of a bowel obstruction may include but are not limited to:***

- Abdominal swelling
- Abdominal pain/cramping
- Constipation
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Watery or thin stool
- Blood in stool
- Inability to pass gas

#### ***Outcomes of a bowel obstruction may include but are not limited to:***

- Reoccurrence of bowel obstruction
- Dehydration
- Infection
- Hole in the intestine (perforation)

**A complete intestinal obstruction is a medical emergency!**

**Recommendations:** Awareness of risk is important. Be aware of bowel obstruction symptoms and common causes of bowel obstructions. Report any changes in an individual's bowel regimen to a healthcare professional.

Consider the following when preparing the individuals care plan.

- Establishing a bowel protocol
- Creating and recording a bowel movement log



## Virginia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Services

- Creating and recording hydration log sheet
- Meal planning with a nutritional or nursing consultant
- Consulting with a Gastroenterologist (GI – Doctor) if applicable
- Preventive health screenings – colorectal cancer
- Contacting a Registered Nurse Care Consultant at 804-786-1746 after developing your plan for technical assistance.

**Please note: this information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health providers with any questions about your medical condition.**

### References:

Ansari, P. (2016). Merck Manuals. Retrieved from <http://www.merckmanuals.com/professional/gastrointestinal-disorders/acute-abdomen-and-surgical-gastroenterology/intestinal-obstruction>

Harvard Medical School. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.patienteducationcenter.org/articles/bowel-obstruction/>

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