Algorithm for the Management of Opioid Induced Constipation

Assessment:
- Normal bowel habits
- Stool frequency
- Stool consistency
- Ease of evacuation

Obstructed bowel?

Yes
- Surgical consult
- Get abdominal X-Ray

No

Correct any metabolic or endocrine dysfunction
Increase hydration
Use:
- Stimulant laxatives (sennoside or bisacodyl)
- Stool softener (docusate)
- Osmotic laxative (lactulose or PEG 3350)

No Success in 48 hours

Assess Cause

Hypomotility:
e.g., ascites, autonomic neuropathy, abdominal cancer

Consider prokinetic agents or other targeted treatment
e.g., erythromycin or metoclopramide

Opioid induced suspicion:
- Switch to less constipating opioids
e.g., Fentanyl, or methadone
- Get abdominal X-Ray

No Success

Consider methylnaltrexone

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