

THE FATAL FOUR IN I/DD

There are four major health issues identified in people with intellectual and/or development disabilities (I/DD) that have led to serious illnesses, infections, and sometimes death. They are called the Fatal Four: dehydration, seizures, choking/aspiration, and constipation.



DEHYDRATION



SEIZURE



CHOKING



CONSTIPATION

CONSTIPATION IS LIFE THREATENING IF A LARGE IMPACTION BLOCKS THE INTESTINE. LARGE IMPACTIONS CAN TEAR THE INTESTINAL WALL, ALLOWING STOOL TO SEEP INTO THE ABDOMEN, ENTER THE BLOODSTREAM, AND CAUSE A SERIOUS INFECTION.

CAUSES OF CONSTIPATION

- Lack of fiber
- Inadequate fluids
- Lack of exercise
- Medication side effects
- Certain medical conditions - diabetes, stroke, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome
- Not enough time for toileting

SYMPTOMS OF CONSTIPATION

- Small, hard stools
- Crying, grimacing, grunting, straining on toilet
- Rectal digging
- Hitting abdomen
- Hard, protruding abdomen
- Refusal to participate in activities
- Lack of appetite
- Avoidance of using the bathroom due to pain
- Extended time in the bathroom
- Fever

BE PROACTIVE TO PREVENT CONSTIPATION

- Provide/encourage fluids throughout the day, especially for those unable to obtain fluids independently.
- Increase dietary fiber - fruits and vegetables, whole-grain cereals and breads.
- Encourage physical activity.
- Offer opportunity for toileting on routine basis.
- If unsure of type and number of stools, use a bowel movement (BM) record.
- Check BM record every shift; notify physician if no BM in 3 days or as indicated in person's care plan.
- Identify people at risk and follow prevention strategies.