

The Fatal Four in ID/A

There are four major health issues identified in people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) that have led to serious illnesses, infections, and sometimes death. They are called the **Fatal Four: choking/aspiration, constipation, dehydration, and seizures.**



Choking



Constipation



Dehydration



Seizure

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.