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Low Anterior Resection Syndrome

Low anterior resection syndrome is a collection of symptoms some patients have after undergoing removal of a part of the colon with reconnection to the low rectum in a very low position. This avoids the need for a permanent colostomy, but sacrifices much of the natural rectal storage capacity. These symptoms include frequent/urgent stools, clustering of stools (multiple small bowel movements over a short period of time), bowel incontinence, and increased gassiness.

Not all patients experience every symptom. Each patient is unique. Many patients notice that their symptoms resolve over time. There is usually gradual improvement. The most dramatic improvement occurs within the first six to nine months.

The following helpful hints may be of use in managing these symptoms.

- Muscle strengthening exercises combined with dietary changes may help with urgency and stool incontinence.
- Clustering of bowel movements may be improved by adding a fiber supplement and a glass of water to the end of each meal. You can try the following regimen:
 - One dose of Questran (prescription required) mixed with water/juice in the morning, followed by a glass of water.
 - One hour later, take an Imodium AD (available without prescription).
 - One hour later, take FloraQ (available without prescription)
 - At bedtime, take one dose of Citrucel or Metamucil (i.e., fiber supplement).
- An active culture yogurt consumed daily may be beneficial.
- Chew all foods thoroughly.
- Try small, frequent meals (5-6/day).
- Skipping meals may worsen watery stools and cause increased gas.
- Add new foods to the diet one at a time until their effect on bowel movements can be determined.
- Drink plenty of liquids.
- Sip fluids slowly and drink either between meals or at the end of a meal.
- Avoid large amounts of caffeine as this can worsen stool output.
- Eat foods high in soluble fiber and use fiber supplements. This will slow and thicken the stool.
- If milk adversely affects you, try lactose free milk or enzyme tablets.
- Imodium AD is an over-the-counter anti-diarrheal medication. It also increases sphincter pressure.
- Carry a survival pack (baby wipes, calmoseptine ointment, Imodium), take advantage of aisle seating and be aware of restroom locations.