

# The Fatal Five in ID/A

There are five major health issues identified in people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) that lead to serious illness, infections and sometimes death. They are called the **Fatal Five: choking/aspiration, constipation, dehydration, seizures, and infection.**



Choking



Constipation



Dehydration



Seizure



Infection

***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.