



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

South Carolina Board of Nursing

110 Centerview Dr. • Columbia • SC • 29210

P.O. Box 12367 • Columbia • SC 29211-2367

Phone: 803-896-4550 • NURSEBOARD@llr.sc.gov • Fax: 803-896-4515

llr.sc.gov/nurse

ADVISORY OPINION # 20

FORMULATED: November 20, 1987

REVISED: January 2020, April 2003

REVEWED: April 2023, March 2018, March 2011, July 2007, May 2006, July 2005, February. 2001, July 1998, Jan. 1997, July

QUESTION: Is it within the role and scope of responsibilities of unlicensed assistive personnel to perform digital intervention for the treatment of fecal impaction?

The State Board of Nursing for South Carolina acknowledges that digital intervention for the treatment of fecal impaction is **NOT** within the role and scope of responsibilities of unlicensed assistive personnel. However, it is within the role and scope of responsibilities of licensed nurses and should **NOT** be delegated to unlicensed assistive personnel.

A fecal impaction is caused by unrelieved constipation and is considered a medical problem diagnosed by a Licensed Independent Practitioner (LIP) performing a physical exam based on patient symptoms. Digital intervention used to remove the stool is often done by the LIP or nurse when other methods of facilitating a bowel movement are not effective.

This digital intervention process is not to be confused with digital stimulation used in patients experiencing spinal cord injury and have specific bowel management plans implemented on a regular basis. In these situations, trained unlicensed assistive personnel may perform this function when delegated by a licensed nurse.

This statement is an advisory opinion of the Board of Nursing as to what constitutes competent and safe nursing practice.