

Managing Constipation

Constipation means having bowel movements less frequently than normal and is often characterized stool that is hard, dry and difficult to pass. Constipation can often be the result of cancer treatments or pain medications, though, it may simply be the result of not eating enough fiber, getting enough exercise or drinking enough fluids. Bowel habits are also heavily influenced by psychological state and routine. Thus, stress or travel may trigger constipation, and methods to bring about relaxation and familiarity may be helpful.

Tips for Managing Constipation:

- Drink fluids throughout the day. At least 12 8-ounce glasses may be necessary if you are prone to constipation. Warm or hot beverages seem to be particularly good for digestion, so consider drinking herbal teas or hot water with lemon, especially in the morning.
- Develop routine. Even if you do not feel an urge, sit in the restroom at the same time every day, and try to relax by reading a book or doing something to distract your mind.
- It may seem silly, but appropriate bathroom posture can aid in the passage of stool. Place a small stool under your feet so that your knees hug your chest (a squatting position), and relax, as above.
- Raw fruit and non-starchy vegetables contain the right type of natural sugars and fiber to decrease “transit time” through the intestines and stimulate a bowel movement.
- Prune juice is a natural laxative. Try 1/2 -1 cup of hot prune juice before bed or first thing in the morning.
- Exercise daily. Physical activity can stimulate the digestive tract.
- Be aware of which foods have certain effects on your bowel patterns, and avoid the ones that make you constipated. A high intake of refined carbohydrates, such as white breads and white rice may be constipating for some people.
- If you increase your dietary fiber intake, be particularly conscious of drinking plenty of water. Fiber without adequate fluid can exacerbate constipation.
- Stay away from the regular use of laxative herbal teas, which often contain senna and will desensitize your digestive tract if overused.