

Managing Constipation

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Constipation can be caused by a variety of different factors. It is often drug-induced from pain medications, diuretics, sedatives, antidepressants, and iron supplements to name a few. Additionally, a low-fiber diet, low fluid intake, and little physical activity will cause constipation. A general rule-of-thumb in diagnosing constipation in adults and children is lack of a bowel movement in three and four days, respectively.

Tips to Combat Constipation

- Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of water or herbal tea per day to help soften your stool
- If the cause of constipation is due to medications, you may need to limit your intake of high fiber foods. While fiber is important for bowel health, symptoms can actually worsen for some on medications.
- If constipation is not medication-induced, increase your fiber intake slowly to include at least 20-35 grams of fiber. You must accompany this increase in fiber with an increase in fluid.
- Daily exercise helps to keep your bowels moving. Taking a walk for thirty minutes or doing Yoga may ease constipation.

Common Therapies	High Fiber Foods to Consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Over-the-counter bulk-forming laxatives such as psyllium husks (Metamucil®) or wheat dextrin (Benefiber®) may help. Take 1 tablespoon in 1 cup of cold water every morning. These therapies usually work within 48 hours. <input type="checkbox"/> Dandelion stimulates bile production which helps to resolve constipation. In tea form, drink 1 cup three times per day. You may also want to try dried dandelion root in the form of a tincture. <input type="checkbox"/> Senna and buckthorn are two laxative compounds found in many herbal supplements. While they are powerful, you can actually do more harm than good if you do not know how to use these. Follow a homeopathic practitioner's advice before trying these. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase soluble fiber (pectins, mucilages, gums) and insoluble fiber (psyllium and bran) by eating 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. <input type="checkbox"/> Ground or powdered flaxseed is a great source of fiber and Omega-3 fatty acids. Sprinkle into your food to add more fiber. <input type="checkbox"/> Lactulose may be prescribed for those with chronic constipation. <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking several cups of warm-to-hot water or tea in the morning with breakfast may offer some relief. Follow this by sitting on the toilet for at least 10-15 minutes even if you are not able to have a bowel movement. This will relax and stimulate your bowels. This may take months to work, but eventually your body will build a routine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Raisins, prunes, or figs -Raw vegetables/salads -Whole-grain breads -Bran cereal -Fresh fruit -Cooked oatmeal -Applesauce -Bananas -Cooked beans (ie, black, kidney, pinto) -Cooked barley and lentils
<h4>Additional Therapies</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applying castor oil topically over the abdomen with a heat pad may offer benefit <input type="checkbox"/> Aromatherapy, acupuncture/acupressure, and massage <input type="checkbox"/> BEING PATIENT! In general, constipation usually resolves with the changes you make to your diet and exercise routine. 	<h4 style="background-color: #e0e0e0;">What to Avoid</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Juices are high in calories and not a good source of fiber -Caffeinated beverages and alcohol can actually dehydrate your body. If you drink these, you need to increase your fluid intake to offset this.