



Resources Available

- Continenence Clinic, Trillium Health Centre – Laura Robbs, Clinical Nurse Specialist-Continenence. 416-521-4090
- Canada’s Food Guide
- Health Canada’s website - www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/index_3.html

This information is of a general nature. Specific concerns should be discussed with your health professional.

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Preventing Constipation





PREVENTING CONSTIPATION

What is Constipation?

Constipation (con-stuh-pay-shun) occurs when stool, feces or waste material in your body moves too slowly through the large intestines (bowel) and into the rectum. The waste material (stool) becomes hard and dry if it stays too long in your large intestine. Passing stool from the body into the toilet is called a bowel movement.

What is normal?

Each person is different. For some people, it is normal to have bowel movement 2 or 3 times per day. For others, it is normal to have a bowel movement once a day. For still others it is normal to go twice a week.

What are the signs of constipation?

- Bowel movements that are hard
- Straining, pain or bleeding during a bowel movement
- A feeling of fullness or incomplete emptying after a bowel movement
- A feeling of pain or pressure, bloating or rumbling noises in your belly
- Loss of appetite, indigestion

DRUG & DOSE	WHEN TO BE CAREFUL TAKING DRUG	POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS
Senna (<i>Senokot</i> ®) 17.2-34.4 mg or 2-4 tablets once to twice daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intestinal or bowel blockage • Fecal impaction • Those on anticoagulants e.g. Warfarin (Coumadin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abdominal cramping • chronic use causes melanosis coli (brown pigment in colon mucosa)
Bisacodyl (<i>Dulcolax</i> ®) 5-15 mg by mouth as single dose OR 10 mg suppository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intestinal blockage • ↓ effect of Warfarin (Coumadin) and Antacids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abdominal cramping
Methycellulose (<i>Prodiem</i> ®, <i>Metamucil</i> , ®) 5-15 ml OR 1 tsp. – 1 Tbs. once daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, intestinal blockage or fecal impaction • When not drinking at least 1500 ml of fluid/day • When bed bound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloating and abdominal pain especially if not drinking enough fluids



COMMONLY USED MEDICATIONS FOR CONSTIPATION

DRUG & DOSE	WHEN TO BE CAREFUL TAKING DRUG	POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS
<i>Lactulose</i> 15-60 ml 1-4 times/day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes • when on Warfarin (Coumadin) • when on galactose-free diet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ flatulence (rectal gas), can ease after taking medication for awhile • abdominal cramping • diarrhea • ↑ blood sodium and/or ↓ in potassium
<i>Milk of Magnesia</i> 30-60 ml by mouth once or twice daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renal (kidney) problems • those with an ostomy, fecal impaction, or intestinal blockage • medications: tetracyclines, digoxin, indomethacin, iron salts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abdominal cramping • chalky texture of drug (mix instead with other fluids) • ↑ blood magnesium
<i>Glycerin Suppository</i> 1 inserted into rectum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severe fecal impaction • intestinal blockage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discomfort in rectal area • burning in rectal area
<i>Phosphate or Fleet® enema</i> One enema as a single dose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those with ↑ blood sodium, ↑ phosphorous, renal failure, ↓ calcium, fecal impaction • congestive heart failure & liver cirrhosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diarrhea

What causes constipation?

- A change in diet or eating a diet low in fibre
- Not drinking enough fluids
- A change in daily routine
- Lack of physical activity
- Ignoring the urge that signals a bowel movement – this delays the bowel movement and it becomes harder
- Taking medications that can cause constipation including prescription drugs (such as water pills, pain pills, antidepressants) and over-the-counter medications (such as iron pills, antacids etc.)
- Using laxatives for a long time
- Health problems such as diabetes, hypothyroidism, depression and Parkinson's disease



How do I prevent constipation?

- Introduce high fibre foods to your diet. Including more fruits with the skins, vegetables, bran, beans and whole grains can do this. The fibre content of most packaged foods can be found on the label.
- Some people find that prunes, prune juice or a tablespoon or two every day of a combination of softened and pureed dried fruits such as prunes, dates and raisins helps them from getting constipated.
- Fibre supplements are also available and come as a tablet, granules or powder. A pharmacist can help you to choose the best supplement for you. If you are not able to drink 1500mL (6-8 measuring cups) of fluid every day, talk to your health care team before taking a fibre supplement.
- Drink 1500mL or more of water and juice every day. Beverages such as tea and coffee can still be part of your diet but do not count as part of the total amount of fluids we recommend.

How to read a food label for the amount of fibre:

- Look for FIBRE on the NUTRITION INFORMATION list
- Source of fibre = 2 grams or less of fibre per serving
- *High* = 4 grams of fibre per serving,
- *Very high* = 6 grams or more fibre per serving

Nutrition Facts	
Per 125 ml (87 g)	
Calories	80
Fat	0.5 g
Sodium	0 mg
Carbohydrate	9 g
Fibre	2g
Sugar	2 g
Protein	3 g

Sources of Fibre Content of foods tables: Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods, 1999; Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, JT Pennington, 17th ed.1998

Developed by Toronto Public Healthiest Babies Possible Dietitians, September 2000



Other Sources of Fibre: 2 - 4 grams of fibre per serving

FOOD ITEM	PORTION	GRAMS OF FIBRE
Brown rice	1 cup	3.1
Multigrain bread	2 slices	3
Nuts, seeds	½	3
Granola cereal	½	3
Hummus- made with chick peas	¼ cup	3
Whole grain cereal	¾ cup	2 to 4
All other fruit	1 medium or ½ cup	2 to 3.5
Oatmeal, cooked	¾ cup	2.7
Prune juice	½ cup	2.7
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons	2
Bran muffin	1 small	2
Prunes	3	1.8
All other vegetables	1 medium or ½ cup	1.5-2



- Exercise such as walking at least 15 to 20 minutes once or twice every day has been found to help. Find an exercise activity that is easy and that you enjoy doing. Before starting any exercise program, please consult with your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist.
- Avoid delaying the urge to have a bowel movement as this is a natural reflex that happens only once or twice daily. Allow yourself time and privacy to go the bathroom. For some people after a meal, especially breakfast, is a good time to sit on the toilet. Don't hurry or rush yourself when sitting on the toilet. Take a book or magazine with you. Sit with your trunk forward, hips and knees bent and feet on the floor.

Recipes for high fibre supplements:

Fruit Lax –take 1-2 TBS daily

Ingredients: ½ cup raisins, ½ cup dates, 1/3 cup molasses, 1/3 cup water, ½ cup prunes or baby plums

Method: Soften dates before blending. Blend molasses, water, raisins and prunes. Add dates and blend until smooth. Refrigerate, good for 2 weeks. Makes a nice spread for toast or muffins

Natural Bran Mixture –take 1 TBS daily

Ingredients: 2 cups applesauce, 1 cup prune juice, 1 cup raw bran

Method: Mix together and refrigerate



HIGH TO VERY HIGH FIBRE DIET

25-35 Grams of Fibre/ day



Follow these tips to increase your fibre intake:

- Fibre is found in grains, fruit and vegetables not milk products, meat or fat
- Have at least 1/3 cup of high fibre (bran) cereal daily. Mix it with your regular cereal if you don't like to eat bran alone or add it to baking or cooking
- Use whole grain, dark rye or pumpernickel breads
- Use brown rice or whole wheat pasta
- Use nuts, seeds, raisins and legumes (chick peas, lentils, kidney beans) regularly
- Have at least 3 servings of fruit each day
- Have at least 3-4 servings of vegetables (1 ½ cups or more) each day
- **Drink at least 6 glasses of fluid a day.** Your body needs a lot more fluid to digest the fibre

Fibre Content of Foods

Very high Sources of Fibre: 6 grams or more per serving

FOOD ITEM	PORTION	GRAMS OF FIBRE
Lentils, cooked	½ cup	8
Dried beans, cooked (chick peas, white peas, split peas, kidney, white, romano, soya beans)	½ cup	6-7
Bran cereal	¾ cup	6.3

High Sources of Fibre: 4 - 6 grams per serving

FOOD ITEM	PORTION	GRAMS OF FIBRE
Papaya	1	5.3
Whole wheat pita bread	1	5
Figs, dried	3	5
Potato with skin, baked	1 medium	4.8
Green peas, boiled	½ cup	4.4
Pear with skin	1 medium	4
Whole wheat, dark rye, pumpernickel bread	2 slices	4
Bulgur, cooked	½ cup	4
Apple with skin	1 medium	4.1