



MedStar Montgomery Medical Center

Prevention and Treatment of Constipation

What is constipation? Constipation is having fewer than three bowel movements a week or having stools that are large, dry or otherwise difficult to pass.

Following are some tips for prevention and treatment:

Eat Fiber.

- A high-fiber diet and increased fluid intake will help prevent or treat constipation.
- Slowly increase the amount of fiber you eat over the course of several weeks to a goal of 20 to 35 grams each day. Read the nutrition facts on food labels and choose foods with one to five grams of fiber per serving.
- Dried plums, stewed prunes, prune juice, and plum juice are all effective in maintaining regularity.
- Eat whole grain breads and cereals. Look for 100 percent whole wheat, including multigrain, rye, oatmeal, or bran.
- Choose brown or wild rice over white rice. Try whole wheat pasta.
- Choose a variety of grains. Good choices include barley, farro, corn, and quinoa.
- Enjoy bean-based soups. Add beans or lentils to salads. Try black beans, garbanzo, pinto, or cannelloni.

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- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables with the skins. Pears and berries are very high in fiber.
- Snack on popcorn, whole grain crackers, nuts, and dried fruit.

Drink Fluids.

- Drink plenty of fluids; at least eight, eight-ounce cups per day unless restricted by your physician.
- Fluids include all beverages, like milk, coffee, tea, soups, popsicles, ice cream, and Jello®.
- Drinking Metamucil® or Benefiber® mixed with at least eight ounces of water is also effective.

Get Active.

- Try to keep active! A sedentary lifestyle contributes to constipation.

Ask Your Physician About Taking Laxatives or a Stool Softener.

- Keep in mind that many medications cause constipation. Speak with your physician about prescribing a stool softener, such as Docusate (Ducolax® or Colace®) or a laxative such as Senna (Senokot®) to help you with your bowel regime.

For further information, please contact a MedStar Montgomery Medical Center registered dietitian at 301-774-8637, ext. 1.

