

Constipation

name: _____

Why do I need to treat this?

Your provider thinks that your symptoms could be related to your constipation. Constipation can be associated with many complaints. For example it can make urinating more difficult, make periods painful, increase back pain, and it can worsen depression. It is important to have soft regular bowel movements and see how your symptoms change.

Why am I constipated?

For many people it is simply a matter of changing some habits:

- Chewing your food well.
- Drinking more water (for most people this is 6-8 glasses or 1 ½ to 2 quarts/liters).
- Getting more movement: walking for 45 minutes or more a day.
- Add more vegetables and fiber: are you getting anywhere close to 5 servings of fruit and veggies a day?
- Stop drinking milk and eating cheese (do it for 2 or more weeks and see if your constipation goes away), other foods may be making it worse too, but this is the most common one.

For others it is more complex:

Medicine Side effect (narcotics, blood pressure medicines, others), a sign of an imbalance (low thyroid), slow bowels, muscles not working together well.

What can I do about it?

Treat Cause: See above 'why am I constipated' and start there

- **Digestion Basics:**
 - Chew my food well
 - Stop eating and drinking when you are 2/3 full
 - Sit and relax during meals
 - Pay attention to how you feel when you eat certain foods and record what foods you think might be making my symptoms worse.
- **Warm Drinks in the Morning:** hot water with lemon, herbal tea, others. Activates the colon, generally within 15 minutes!
- **Low in Fiber:** I will increase my fiber with the following:
1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
Foods with high content: **prunes**, apple, beans, fruits and vegetables.
Fiber in the diet helps, but most need to supplement with psyllium husks (Metamucil) start 1 tsp and up to 1 Tbs a day or other (partially hydrolyzed guar gum (Benefiber), oat bran, Ground Flax seeds, 2 Tbsp daily (adds omega 3 fatty acids AND fiber!) **If your constipation gets worse with fiber, then drink more water, if it is still worse then stop the fiber.**
- **Low in Fluids:** for most this is about ½ ounce per pound of weight, for an average sized person that is about 1½ to 2 quarts a day!
- **Low in Movement: even walking 45 minutes a day helps many**
- **Got 'Too Much' Milk:** do a trial of 2 weeks with no dairy and see how that does.
- **If you know that other foods also stop you up, then avoid them too.**

Reduce the three worst foods in my diet:

- 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____
- **For Kids or if on the shorter side** - put your feet on a stool or bench while on the toilet. This position may help.

Clear out Bowel

- If you are **mildly stopped up**: You may have something that works well for you already, you can use that. If not here are some options:
- **NOTE: if you go too fast or dose too high on any of these you may get diarrhea, bloating, cramping. Just cut back and try again...**
 1. **Magnesium: 250-800 mg a day in divided dosages. If you get loose stools cut back your dose by 200 mg.**
 2. **Vitamin C: 2000-10,000mg a day**
 3. **Senna: Senokot®, ex-lax use as directed.**
 4. **Smooth Move or Similar Tea: 1 glass in the morning or evening works for most.**
 5. **Docusate (Colace) 250mg twice a day**
 6. **Power Pudding** - equal parts (stewed prunes, applesauce and wheat or oat bran). Keep it in the fridge and take a couple of spoonfuls a day.
 7. **Triphola** - from India, a mix of 3 fruits, very effective but may take several weeks to work.
- If you are **really stopped up**
 1. **From Above:**
 - a. **Sorbitol (less \$) or Lactulose** : start with two large spoonfuls per day and gradually increase to One ounce or more a day, then twice a day, then more as needed. There is no upper limit.
 - b. **Miralax**: as per instructions 17-34g a day
 2. **From Below:**
 - a. **Enemas**: Fleets, Oil, Milk, others
 - b. **Suppositories**: glycerine or dulcolax work well

Restore Normal Function

- **Full Spectrum Digestive Enzymes**: one to three with each meal.
- **Betaine HCL**: one 20 minutes before each meal, increase by one tablet until you feel a warmth in your stomach before you eat (max 3). Especially helpful with digesting protein. Use regularly for 10 to 14 days to decide how much it helps.
- **Probiotics (especially Bifidus)**: Start a probiotic (combination of lactobacillus and bifidus about 10 billion organisms a day) or eat fermented foods: Yogurt, Kefir, Kim chi, Sauerkraut, Miso, Buttermilk
- **Biofeedback or Special exercises (Kegel and Belly In's)**

Then Wean down or off of therapies...

Start by weaning down on _____

If you have a lot of Stress: Answer the question: What stresses me out the most? Ask us about stress management handout/information.