

Whether you have to go and just can't or you just don't feel any urge, constipation is a real pain in the you know what. Chronic constipation can lead to the formation of hemorrhoids and fissures (ouch!) and generally represents poor digestive function.

There are a number of ways that your diet and lifestyle contribute to this, but sometimes circumstances beyond our control can cause constipation in even the healthiest colon.

Common causes of acute & chronic constipation:

- Inadequate fiber intake
- Inadequate fluid intake or acute dehydration
- Inadequate physical activity
- Medical conditions (ie pregnancy, diabetes)
- Medications (ie opioids, antibiotics)
- Misuse of laxatives
- Reactions to specific foods/ingredients
- Travel
- Changes in lifestyle or major stressors

Acute Relief:

Most tools for constipation relief take time to take effect and for some it is a combination of tools that does the trick. For medications and supplements, these often support a bowel movement to happen ~8+ hours after you take them. This is why we dose at night, so you have a normal bowel movement in the morning, often in the comfort of your own home.

If you are not getting relief within a 3-5 days and are continuing to have an absence of void, contact your provider.

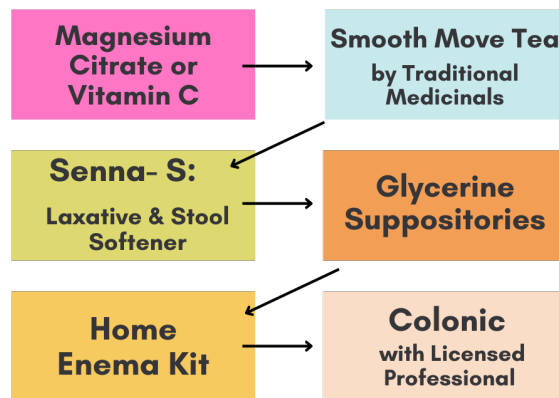
>> Osmotic Laxatives

These helps to keep water in your bowels, which supports more regular bowel movements for most (similar to Miralax). Start with one capsule at bedtime nightly for 2 days, if no change in stool (ie having a Bowel Movement in the morning), then increase to 2 capsules. Continue increasing by one pill at a time until you are having a daily bowel movement. You can divide the dose throughout the day or add additional doses if needed.

- Magnesium Citrate: Dose between 100-1000mg/dose
- Vitamin C: dose between 500-5000mg/dose;

Note: Magnesium and vitamin C will combine for a stronger effect. Some may need to take these apart from each other.

URGENT SUPPORT FOR CONSTIPATION



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>>Smooth Move Tea: Senna is a plant medicine that causes your gut to have increased peristalsis, the movement that helps move food through your gut. Start with 1 cup before bed. In capsule form, you can use Senna-S: The S stands for a stool softener, which may be helpful if you have had prolonged time without stool or tend to have very hard stools. This should not be used long term.

>> Glycerin Suppositories: These are useful when you have gone longer than normal without a bowel movement as they help induce movement and spasm in the rectum. This can feel very crampy for some.

>>Enema Treatment: This is a system to introduce fluid into the rectum, which helps to loosen stool and tends to cause a spasm that helps get a bowel movement started. This can feel very crampy for some.

>>Colonic: These are performed by a trained professional and like an enema, insert water into the bowels. Unlike an enema, there is a much higher volume of liquid that goes further up into the left side of the colon (descending colon). These tend to help clear out larger bowel impactions or backups.

A note on laxative use:

Long-term use of laxatives, even herbal stimulants can reduce your body's natural ability to eliminate and may require you to "retrain" your bowels. Try to avoid these products unless under the guidance of a healthcare professional.

Prevention of Chronic Constipation

>> Stay well-hydrated: Take in extra fluids as you increase your fiber intake. Your goal should be at least half your body weight in ounces. For instance, if you weigh 140 lb, you should drink at least 70 oz of water per day. Non-caffeinated beverages, such as herbal teas, coconut water, and low-sugar electrolyte beverages (such as Vitamin Water Zero) can count toward your total water intake.

>> Increase physical activity: Important for optimal digestion. Exercise facilitates movement of food through the digestive tract. Start with 15 minute walks and build up from there. The activity doesn't need to be too intense to have an effect.

>> Be sure to chew food thoroughly, and eat appropriate portion sizes. These simple measures can improve digestion immensely.

>> Bowel Retraining: Sit on the toilet at the same time everyday (after breakfast, for example). Even if you don't go, giving yourself that time helps to train your body that this is an available time. Also don't ignore the urge for a bowel movement. This can contribute to constipation.

>>Constitutional Hydrotherapy: This is an in-office treatment where hot and cold towels are used in conjunction with gentle electrical stimulation to the digestive tract. This helps increase circulation and induce peristalsis in the bowels. A single treatment can be helpful, but is generally done in a series of treatments, usually weekly for 4-6 weeks.

>> Add in more foods to help elimination: prunes, prune juice, ground flaxseed, dried and fresh fruit, oat bran, wheat bran, warm tea, and coffee.

>>Remove Food Sensitivities: For some, removal of a food intolerance is essential to fully recover normal elimination. Your provider may talk to you about different testing options to aid in restoring your digestion.

>> Increase consumption of fermented foods: These foods naturally contain beneficial bacteria that help to keep the digestive tract healthy. Fermented foods include yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, miso, and tempeh. There are also probiotic supplements that may be beneficial.

>>Dietary Fiber:

Fiber can help to either speed up or slow down your bowel movements. Fiber is the indigestible part of plant foods that our bodies need for optimal digestion. The two main types of fiber are soluble and insoluble. Both types of fiber are important to our health for different reasons.

Start with your most consistent meal, often breakfast or lunch, and work to adjust the fiber content in that meal. Even small, sustained changes have a big impact over time. You can also use supplemental fiber capsules to help offset dietary deficiencies.

Soluble fibers are commonly found in fruits (especially pear, apple, and citrus fruits), oats, barley, and legumes. These water-soluble fibers form gels within the digestive tract, and provide many beneficial health effects including:

- Contributes to feelings of fullness and decreases appetite.
- Slows the absorption of carbohydrates, which can reduce blood sugar.
- Helps to lower blood cholesterol and triglycerides.

Insoluble fibers are commonly found in wheat bran, corn bran, whole grain breads and cereals, as well as vegetables. The main beneficial effect of insoluble fiber is increasing movement of food through the digestive tract, thus preventing constipation.

US RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance) for Fiber Intake

	Age	Grams/day		Age	Grams/day
Males	9-13 yrs	31	Females	9-13 yrs	26
	14-18 yrs	38		14-18 yrs	26
	19-30 yrs	38		19-30 yrs	25
	31-50 yrs	38		31-50 yrs	25
	51-70 yrs	30		51-70 yrs	21
	> 70 yrs	30		> 70 yrs	21
Children	1-3 yrs	19	Pregnant		28
	4-8 yrs	25		Lactating	29

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