



The Surgical Institute
at True North

CHE MILLER MD | KAYLA WATKINS-JONES MD
BRETT LOCKE APRN

Constipation In Adults

Constipation Overview

Constipation refers to a change in bowel habits, but it has varied meanings. Stools may be too hard or too small, difficult to pass, or infrequent (less than 3 times per week). People with constipation may also notice a frequent need to strain and sense that the bowels are not empty. Many factors can contribute to or cause constipation, although in most people, no single cause can be found. In general, constipation occurs more frequently as you get older.

Constipation Treatment

Behavior changes - The bowels are most active following meals, and this is often the time when stools will pass most readily. If you ignore your body's signals to have a bowel movement, the signals become weaker and weaker over time. By paying close attention to these signals, you may have an easier time moving your bowels. Drinking a caffeine-containing beverage in the morning may also be helpful.

Increase fiber - Increasing fiber in your diet may reduce or eliminate constipation. The recommended amount of dietary fiber is 20 to 35 grams of fiber per day. By reading the product information panel on the side of the package, you can determine the number of grams of fiber per serving. Many fruits and vegetables can be particularly helpful in preventing and treating constipation. This is especially true of citrus fruits, prunes, and prune juice. Some breakfast cereals are also an excellent source of dietary fiber.

Avoid laxatives - A wide variety of natural products are advertised for constipation. Some of them contain the active ingredients found in available laxatives. Anthraquinone-based laxatives (laxatives containing senna, cascara, aloe, or rhubarb) can damage and destroy the cells that line the colon, slowing bowel function.

Constipation Regimen

Regimen

Step 1: Colace 100 mg three times daily

Step 2: MiraLax 17 gm daily; if not successful, increase to twice daily

Step 3: Mineral oil 10 ml daily

Step 4: 1 bottle of magnesium citrate

When adding the next step, never stop the previously listed step. If the complete above regimen is unsuccessful, call our office at (580) 255-9797.

Diet and Lifestyle Changes:

Increase your fluid intake. Since constipation is related to dehydration in the colon, be sure to drink plenty of fluids. When body is properly hydrated, less water will be withdrawn from the colon, making your stool soft and easier to pass.

Increase your fiber intake. Adding fiber to your diet increases the weight of your stool and speeds its passage through your intestines. Slowly begin eating more fresh fruit and vegetables each day. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals. A sudden increase in the amount of fiber you eat can cause bloating and gas, so start slowly and work your way up to your goal over a few weeks.

Exercise more days of the week. Physical activity increases muscle activity in your intestines. Try to fit in exercise most days of the week.

Don't ignore the urge to have a bowel movement. Take your time in the bathroom, allowing yourself enough time to have a bowel movement without distractions and without feeling rushed.

New treatments - Lubiprostone (Amitiza) and linaclotide (Linzess) are prescription medications that treat severe constipation. One of these medications may be recommended if you do not respond to traditional treatments.