



Managing Constipation

Did You Know?

Constipation is a common problem, but adequate fluid, fiber, and physical activity can help!

Sometimes medications may be necessary, but be sure to consult with your physician first.



Constipation is an unpleasant problem that can become more common as we age. There are a lot of things that contribute to constipation, such as many medications, certain health conditions, and physical ailments that decrease our ability to walk and be active.

Constipation can lead to severe consequences, such as fecal impaction or even bowel perforation. It also can be a sign of something more serious. If your constipation is severe, painful, or includes bleeding, it is important to talk with your doctor. He or she may want to investigate the cause, or adjust medications to help with symptoms.

While some factors cannot be changed, many factors *can* be corrected, such as fiber consumption, fluid intake, and physical activity.

Here are some tips to help with constipation:

- Drink adequate fluid. Urine should be light yellow and odorless. See our handout titled *Dehydration for Older Adults* for more information and tips.
- Increase physical activity as you are able. Even a little extra walking, stretching, or standing can help.
- Be cautious with laxatives and stool softeners. Some can actually make the problem worse, cause dependence, and come with unintended side effects. Work with your physician to determine the right plan for you.
- Gradually increase fiber intake, preferably through whole fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Try these tips:
 - Choose whole wheat pastas and breads, or brown rice.
 - Choose oatmeal for breakfast, or a cold cereal with at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.
 - Add beans to soups, salads, and pasta dishes.
 - Add a handful of frozen vegetables to your canned or homemade soup when reheating.
 - Leave the peels on your apples when making baked goods, like apple pie or apple crisp.
 - Add berries to your cereal, yogurt, or cottage cheese.

These easy tips may not only help your constipation, but also benefit your overall health and well-being!