

Managing Constipation

Pain and Constipation

Constipation is often a problem if you have persistent pain. This is because you tend to limit your activity and decrease the amount of food and liquids you eat.

You also may take pain medications, antacids, iron supplements, and anti-depressants. Any of these can cause you to develop hard, dry stools that are difficult to pass.

Steps for Managing Your Constipation

The first step in getting your bowels to work better is to eat, drink, and exercise right. You can often help prevent or ease constipation if you:

- Eat foods that are high in fiber
- Drink a lot of liquids, especially water
- Exercise on a regular schedule

Your Diet

You need to eat foods that are high in fiber. The key is to start with small amounts (a tablespoon) and increase your fiber by small amounts on a weekly basis. This way you won't bloat or cramp as much.

You can add unprocessed wheat bran to other foods such as puddings, yogurt, and baked goods. You can eat high-fiber cereals every day and you can even use these cereals to make high-fiber muffins.

**Steps for
Managing Your
Constipation,
continued**

Your Diet, continued

Many cereals do not have much fiber at all. So read labels to determine how much fiber cereals actually contain. Some of the more high-fiber brands of cereals include:

- Fiber One
- All-Bran
- 100% Bran
- Fiber-All
- Bran Buds

Here is a recipe for a high-fiber supplement:

- 1 cup applesauce
- 1 cup unprocessed wheat bran or Miller's bran
- 3/4 cup prune juice

Mix all ingredients together and refrigerate. Take 1 tablespoon a day for 1 week. Then increase your intake by 1 tablespoon a day until you begin to produce soft stools. Stay at that amount from that point on.

You can also just mix the applesauce and bran together. Be sure to drink 1/2 to 1 glass of prune juice in addition to taking the supplement. You can also add some mashed banana or dried fruits such as raisins or figs to increase fiber content.

Liquids

Be sure to drink plenty of water or other liquids. If you can't get at least 2 quarts a day of liquids, more bulk without liquid can actually make your bowels worse.

**Steps for
Managing Your
Constipation,
continued**

Exercise

Physical activity also helps stimulate bowel action. Walking daily or simple exercises in a chair can have a positive effect on sluggish bowels.

**Types of
Medicines for
Constipation**

If diet and exercise don't get rid of your constipation, you can also take bowel medicines. There are several types that you can try. Each of them has a different effect on constipation, so you should consult your doctor to find the right medicine for you.

Bulk-Forming

These medicines work the same way that bran does. They increase the amount of stool formed. If you take these medicines, you must drink a lot of liquids. Otherwise, they can cause more problems than they solve. Also, these medicines may not work well if you are taking opioids.

Emollient

Emollients are moisturizers or lubricants. A moist stool is easier to manage than a hard, dry stool. Mineral oil is also a good emollient, but is dangerous taken by mouth. If even a tiny amount gets in the lung, it can cause pneumonia.

Hyperosmolar

These medicines pull water into the stool, making it softer. Milk of Magnesia, Citrate of Magnesia, Lactulose, Sorbitol, and glycerine are the common ingredients in this group.

***Types of
Medicines for
Constipation,
continued***

Stimulants

These are the most effective medicines for constipation. Senna, Bisacodyl, and aloe are the common ingredients in this type. Stimulants should be used only when other medicines and treatments are not likely to work, for instance with constipation caused by opioids. If stimulants are overused, they can damage the natural ability to move the bowels.

Suppositories

Many of the types listed above are available in suppository form. Suppositories in general work more quickly and stop working more quickly. This makes bowel control a little easier.

Enemas

Hyperosmolars and emollients can be given as an enema to stimulate a bowel movement. The water of the enema, the lubrication from the ingredient, and pulling more water into the bowel is particularly helpful when there is hard stool at the end of the colon.