



# Constipation & Nutrition

**Constipation** is a decrease in bowel movements, or having stools that are hard or difficult to pass. Some common causes of constipation include:

- A diet low in fiber
- Not getting enough fluids
- Lack of exercise or physical activity
- Repeatedly ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement
- Eating large amounts of milk or cheese products
- Stress
- Some medications, including pain medications, antidepressants, allergy medications, antihistamines, amongst others
- Iron supplements



Diet is one of many ways to manage constipation. In some cases, lifestyle changes may permanently alleviate constipation:

- Eat a well-balanced diet that is high in fiber.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid a day.
- Get regular exercise, daily if possible.
- Go to the bathroom right away when you have the urge to have a bowel movement. Do not try to hold it.
- Limit cheese products and refined grain products.
- Laxatives should be considered a last resort for treating constipation.

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### Adding More Fiber to your Diet

- Slowly increase the amount of fiber eaten each day to 25-35 grams.
- Eat more whole grains. This includes breads, pastas, and cereal with 100% whole wheat, rye, oats, or bran as the first or second ingredient.
- Choose grains with 4 grams dietary fiber or more per serving.
- Have brown or wild rice instead of white rice or potatoes.
- Add beans and peas to casseroles, soups, or use as a meat alternative.
- Eat fruits and vegetables with peels or skins on.
- Fruits such as prunes, apples, bananas, and pears are a good source of fiber.
- Other healthy snack ideas to enjoy include popcorn, granola bars, nuts, seeds, and whole grain crackers.

### Adding More Fluid to your Diet

When increasing the amount of fluid consumed per day to 8 glasses, this includes fluid from all sources. In other words, a day's worth of fluid does not have to come from 100% water. Other sources of fluid include juice, milk, tea, coffee, oral nutritional supplements, certain fruits, soups, gelatin, ice cream, sherbet, and popsicles.



Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

*Additional Notes:*