



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: