

Constipation

This dietary advice sheet gives some general information to help you make the recommended changes to your diet. If you need more detailed advice or if you are following a special diet that makes it difficult to make these changes, please ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

Constipation may occur if you have reduced your dietary intake, altered your diet or routine, your diet lacks enough fibre or fluid, or you have become less active than usual. It can also be a side-effect of certain drugs e.g. pain medications.



Here are some simple suggestions you can incorporate into your diet and lifestyle to help prevent and treat constipation:

- Drink plenty of liquids to help keep your stools soft – aim for 8 - 10 glasses/cups every day. Include water, tea, coffee, fruit juice, squash, fizzy drinks (sugar free) and soup. Try a hot drink in the morning as this may help stimulate bowel activity.
- Increase the amount of fibre in your diet (if concerned about doing this please check with your doctor or dietitian first). If your intake of fibre is currently low, introduce it gradually to help avoid side-effects such as wind or bloating.
- Fibre options include:
 - Wholemeal or wholegrain cereals such as, All Bran, Branflakes, Weetabix, muesli, Shredded Wheat or Porridge.
 - Wholemeal, multigrain and seeded bread and rolls. Opt for half and half or 50/50 bread if you feel a you are not able to manage a complete switch.
 - Wholemeal pasta is tasty in lasagne and macaroni cheese, or try using it in your favourite pasta dishes.
 - Brown rice with its nutty texture offers a flavoursome alternative to white rice (or try a mixture of both).



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- Whole-wheat biscuits and crackers such as digestives, crispbreads, oat cakes and whole-wheat or rye crackers.
- Jacket potatoes, baby potatoes or potato wedges are a good source of fibre if you eat the skins.
- Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and salads. Fresh, frozen and canned (in natural juice or water) fruit and vegetables are all suitable. Aim to eat at least 5 portions a day.
 - 80g fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables counts as 1 daily portion.
 - 150ml of fruit or vegetable juice, or a smoothie counts as 1 daily portion (limit this to a combined total once daily and try to keep to mealtimes to avoid sugar damage to teeth)
- Nuts and seeds make a good snack or addition to cereals, salads or yogurts. Dried fruit such as raisins, apricots and prunes could also be added to meals (30g counts as one portion). Try not to eat dried fruit between meals as it can contribute to tooth decay.
- Pulses such as beans, lentils and chickpeas can be added to stews, casseroles, curries, soups and salads.
- Brown or golden linseeds can help as a stool softener. Add to porridge or yogurts, or sprinkle over salads. Ensure you have a small glass (150ml) fluid with every teaspoon of linseeds. Avoid using raw bran as its high fibre content requires a large amount of fluid to soften the stool and it reduces absorption of other nutrients.
- Favourite natural remedies include syrup of figs, prunes and prune juice.
- If able, try to keep active. If concerned about exercising speak to your doctor about the amount and type of exercise that's right for you.

