

# Constipation

- Eat apricots, dried dates and figs, banana, raspberries, pears, prunes, raisins, and fresh or cooked rhubarb
- Add legumes to your diet, such as chickpeas, lentils, and white kidney beans

Choosing foods judiciously, increasing one's fluid intake, and exercising regularly can help prevent constipation. Always watch your diet: it has a strong impact on your health!



Constipation is a common problem that affects 1 in 4 adults. It is defined as a change in bowel habits that may involve infrequent, incomplete or difficult bowel movements.

It should be noted that the frequency of "normal" bowel movements varies from three times a day to three times a week, and that it also varies from person to person. Furthermore, the body does not require daily bowel movements.

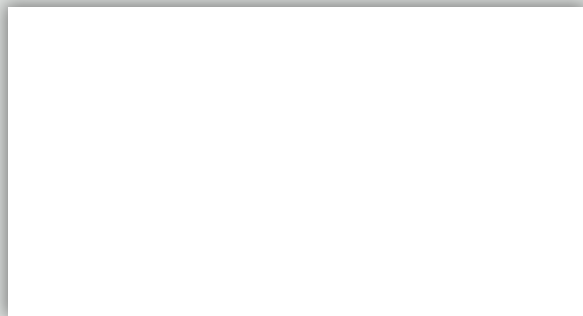
## Diagnosis and Symptoms

A diagnosis of constipation is usually based on symptoms (abdominal discomfort, pain when passing stool and hard stool) and a physical examination. Further testing may



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**Guardian**

## Causes

Constipation can be the symptom of a disease or condition such as irritable bowel syndrome, diabetes or hemorrhoids. Several medications are also known to cause constipation.

Your pharmacist can check the medications you are taking and advise you. A diet that is low in fibre and fluid intake, as well as a lack of exercise can also contribute to constipation. Lastly, there may not be any specific reason to explain why you are constipated.

be ordered if there are signs suggestive of a more serious problem, such as:

- Blood in the stool
- Unexplained weight loss
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Family history of colon cancer
- Vomiting

## Prevention and Treatment

It is possible to prevent and treat constipation by adopting certain lifestyle and dietary habits.

Developing a routine for bowel movements may help prevent and treat constipation. Bowels tend to be more active after meals and it is often a time when the stools pass more easily.

Try to have a bowel movement at the same time every day. Use a footstool to elevate the thighs for a more optimal position for a

bowel movement. Not holding it in and not ignoring the feeling that you need to open your bowels is also important.

### Here is some general advice on how to prevent constipation:

- Exercise regularly, as permitted by your medical condition
- Maintain an adequate level of hydration (one to two litres of liquid each day)
- Maintain a fibre-rich diet
- Include a daily visit to the bathroom in your regimen. This may help create a daily habit
- Avoid retaining when the urge to defecate is felt
- With the help of your physician or pharmacist, revise the way you use laxatives (especially those called irritants). Chronic use of such laxatives may promote constipation

### Here is a list of foods that could help you increase your daily fibre intake:

- Add cereals high in fibre to your diet
- Eat breads made with whole-wheat flour or bran (wheat or oat) rather than white bread
- Eat almonds, peanuts, sesame seeds, and shredded dried coconut
- Eat frozen and canned peas, whole kernel corn, boiled spinach, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, and green beans