



Constipation Management

Constipation means being unable to move your bowels, having bowel movements less often than is normal for you, or having to push harder to move your bowels than you have in the past. Constipation can cause pain and discomfort. Being less active, eating or drinking less, or taking certain medications can cause constipation. Keeping your bowel movements regular and easy to pass is important.

- ◆ Eat at regular times each day.
- ◆ Be sure to drink enough fluids if you add medication or fiber to your diet to prevent or treat constipation. Try to take in 64 fluid ounces of liquid each day. You can drink water, prune juice, warm juices, decaffeinated teas, and hot water with added lemon juice and honey, and include any food that is liquid at room temperature, such as frozen ice pops (Popsicles), gelatin, or ice cream.
- ◆ If you are at risk for constipation or have constipation, establish a bowel plan to be regular. This may include such over-the-counter medications as Senekot, Colace, Metamucil, or any other preparation containing psyllium fiber.
- ◆ Use laxatives only on the advice of your physician. Contact your doctor if you have not had a bowel movement for 3 days or longer.

Tips for Adding Fiber

- ◆ Insoluble and soluble fiber are both helpful to stop constipation; foods with lots of fiber include wheat bran, whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables (raw and cooked with skins and peels on), popcorn, and dried beans. *Caution:* Make sure that a high-fiber diet is recommended. If you have no appetite or problems chewing or swallowing, get full very quickly, or have ever been told that you need a low-fiber, low-residue diet, these foods may not be recommended.
- ◆ Food labels list fiber content as “dietary fiber.” The general recommendation is to eat between 25 and 35 grams of dietary fiber every day; however, the right amount of fiber can be different for each person, depending on need and the ability to digest fiber.

Dealing with Abdominal Gas

- ◆ If abdominal gas becomes a problem, limit drinks and foods that cause gas, such as carbonated drinks, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, dried beans, peas, and onions. Abdominal gas should disappear when bowel function returns to normal.
- ◆ Swallowing air can cause abdominal gas. To swallow less air, try not to talk while eating, drink without a straw, and avoid chewing gum.
- ◆ To help avoid or get rid of painful abdominal gas when eating foods that are known to cause gas, consider taking an over-the-counter supplement, such as Beano or a similar product, or a product that contains simethicone.



Fiber Content in Common Foods*

| Food | Serving Size | Dietary Fiber (grams) |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Breads and Cereals | | |
| Bran cereals | ½ cup | 3–13 |
| Popcorn | 2 cups | 5 |
| Brown rice | ½ cup | 6 |
| Whole-wheat bread | 1 slice | 1–2 |
| Wheat bran, raw | ¼ cup | 6 |
| Legumes | | |
| Kidney beans† | ½ cup | 8 |
| Navy beans† | ½ cup | 9 |
| Vegetables | | |
| Broccoli† | ½ cup | 4 |
| Brussels sprouts† | ½ cup | 3 |
| Carrots | ½ cup | 2 |
| Corn | ½ cup | 5 |
| Green peas | ½ cup | 3 |
| Potato with skin | 1 medium | 3 |
| Fruit | | |
| Apple with peel | 1 medium | 4 |
| Banana | 1 medium | 4 |
| Blueberries | ½ cup | 2 |
| Pear with skin | 1 medium | 5 |
| Prunes | 3 | 3 |
| Orange | 1 medium | 3 |
| Raisins | ¼ cup | 3 |
| Strawberries | 1 cup | 3 |

*The general recommendation for fiber is 25 to 35 grams daily. Increase fiber gradually to prevent discomfort.

†These foods can cause abdominal gas.

Recipes

Fruit 'n Bran

3 parts bran (wheat bran or 100% bran is best)
2 parts applesauce
1 part prune juice

Mix together. Eat three times a day or as needed to help promote bowel movements. Good on toast too.

Gazpacho

2 cans tomato soup
2 cans water
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt
Dash hot sauce
Dash garlic powder
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped
1 green pepper, peeled, seeded, and chopped
1 large can or 2 fresh tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped

Mix together first six ingredients, then add remaining four. Chill and serve with chips or crackers.

*Makes eight 1-cup servings.
Each serving contains 90 calories, 2 grams protein, 3 grams dietary fiber.*