

Chronic Constipation

Nobody likes to talk about it. The straining. The aggravation. Even the pain. But constipation is a reality; a worrisome battle with what should be a simple, natural function. Are you anxious about hearing nature's call? Then listen up: exercise and diet are the factors that promote better bowel movements. People who keep a toned, fit body and eat a high-fiber diet usually aren't bothered by constipation.

Before we talk about how to cure constipation, let's define the problem. Constipation results when waste material moves too slowly through the large bowel, resulting in infrequent and/or painful elimination. It is important to remember that there is no "right" frequency of elimination. Constipation is a change from your normal bowel habits- you're constipated if your bowel movements are less frequent and more difficult than normal. A person who is constipated goes a number of days-not just a few- without having a bowel movement, and the resulting stools tend to be very hard and usually accompanied with painful elimination, a feeling of incomplete evacuation, nausea, bloating and cramping.

Constipation can give rise to many different ailments, including appendicitis, bad breath, body odor, bowel flora imbalance, coated tongue, depression, diverticulitis, fatigue, gas, headaches, hemorrhoids, hernia, indigestion, insomnia, malabsorption syndrome, obesity, varicose veins and may be involved in the development of serious diseases such as bowel cancer.

Constipation is the first warning- a warning that needs to be heeded. If you are constipated, the first thing to do is to consider the cause. The most common cause is insufficient dietary fiber, but many other things can contribute too. Some drugs and vitamin supplements can cause constipation: opiates such as morphine and codeine; aluminum salts in antacids; some dietary iron and calcium supplements; and certain antihistamines, diuretics, antidepressants, antipsychotics and blood-pressure medications. Other things to look for are hypothyroidism, too much calcium in the blood (caused by not enough magnesium and potassium), food allergies, pregnancy (pressure of the intestines), obesity, poor muscle tone, sitting for long periods of time, injury to the bowel nerves, obstruction of the bowel, endocrine abnormalities, tumor, painful anal conditions that makes the person afraid to open their bowels, insufficient water intake, and just not defecating when the urge comes.

Low thyroid function slows down all body functions, including bowel contractions necessary to move wastes out efficiently. Another unsuspected cause, believe it or not, is your tap water. Chlorine compounds in tap water kill helpful intestinal bacteria, leading to a possible overgrowth of harmful bacteria, yeast or even parasites. If you are easily constipated, you may be reacting to the tap water you drink.

Because chronic constipation can be a symptom of a serious life-threatening disease, it is important to identify the cause. Any sudden onset of constipation requires examination and evaluation by a physician. Even if the cause is simply a matter of poor diet, the side effects of constipation are serious.

REGULAR RECOMMENDATIONS

The person whose body is perfectly nourished need have no fear of constipation. Here are some principles of nutrition to adhere to:

- All food should be organically grown- grown without chemical fertilizers. Experience the taste and thrill from eating lots of vegetables free from chemical fertilizers and insecticides.
- Eat lots of organic fruit, grown in pesticide-free soil.
- Eliminate commercially made sweets and white flour products including cookies, muffins, crackers and biscuits. If it doesn't contain whole grains, don't eat it.
- Establish a regular time for bowel action and observe it without fail every day. In addition, make absolutely certain that you relieve your bowels every time you feel the necessity, no matter how much of a rush you are in or how inconvenient it may be.
- Exercise. A walk, a stretch- take the stairs instead of an elevator. Your bowels don't move when you sleep because you aren't exercising them. Give yourself some time in the morning or at lunch for a little physical activity before rushing out or back to work or school.
- Watch the amount of food you eat. Moderation is always important. Too much or too little food can contribute to constipation. Instead of large meals, choose 4-6 smaller meals through out the day of fiber and pectin rich foods, such as fresh fruits, raw green leafy vegetables, brown rice, asparagus, beans, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, garlic, kale, okra, peas, sweet potatoes and whole grains
- Vitamins and minerals must be included in the daily diet for perfect nourishment. Concentrated vitamin and mineral preparations-made from natural sources- should be taken daily, always with food during the process of digestion.

SUPPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Acidophilus- Allows survival and rapid passage of friendly" bacteria through the stomach and into the small intestine
2. Vitamin C- Has a cleansing and healing effect
3. Apple pectin- A source of fiber that aids in correcting constipation.
4. Essential fatty acids-Needed for proper digestion and stool formation
5. Vitamin E- To heal the colon
6. Multivitamin and mineral- To correct any nutrient deficiencies
7. Vitamin B-complex- Aids in proper digestion of fats, CHO's, and protein
8. Extra B12 and Folic acid- To aid in digestion, prevent anemia and deficiency
9. Magnesium- Works with Calcium to regulate muscle tone

10. Vitamin D-Aids in prevention colon cancer
11. Calcium- Needed for proper muscle contraction

HERBAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Bulk laxatives(Increase the bulk of the stool)
 - Psyllium
 - Apple pectin
 - Flax
 - Bran
2. Secretory laxatives(Increase bile flow to intestines)
 - Dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinalis*)
 - Burdock root (*Arctium lappa*)
 - Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*)
3. Stimulant laxatives (Herbs containing anthraquinone glycosides which help the stool retaining muscles to relax and the stool expelling muscles to contract resulting in immediate peristalsis)
 - Aloe vera (*Aloe baradensis*)
 - Rhubarb (*Rheum officinale*)
 - Senna (*Cassia senna*)
 - Cascara sagrada (*Rhamnus purshiana*)