



CENTER OF SURGICAL EXCELLENCE

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CONSTIPATION

What is Constipation?

Constipation means that a person has fewer bowel movements less often than usual. The stool is hard, dry and painful to pass. This can be a problem that lasts a short time or it can be a chronic problem that never seems to go away. Each person has its own normal number of bowel movements. It depends on the food you eat, exercise, and other things. It can be controlled when you understand its causes.

What Causes Constipation?

Bowel movements slow down with age. Taking certain medications can also be a cause for constipation. Diet, exercise and health issues contribute to constipation.

Managing Constipation:

▪ **Eat more Fiber**

Fiber helps form soft, bulky stool. Fiber is found in many vegetables, fruits, and grains.

Some high fiber foods are:

Fresh fruit such as apples, pears, dried fruits like raisins and apricots.

High fiber cereals

Whole grains, bran, and brown rice

Vegetables such as carrots, broccoli spinach, and greens

Nuts and legumes especially beans (lentils, kidney beans, and lima beans)

▪ **Drink Plenty of Water and Other Liquids**

Liquid helps keep the stool soft and easy to pass. Try not to drink liquids that contain caffeine or alcohol as these tend to dry out the digestive system.

▪ **Exercise**

Regular exercise helps the colon do its job. Walking is a great way to be active. Do not start a strenuous exercise program without checking with your doctor first.

▪ **Medications/Laxatives as Directed**

Stool softeners help make stools less hard and dry. Fiber supplements may help soften stool. Most people who are mildly constipated do not need laxatives.

Laxatives come in many forms, liquid, chewing gum, pills, and powder that you mix with water. Your doctor will tell you if you need a laxative and what type is best for you.

Some medicines that you take for another problem might cause constipation. If you take medicine for another problem ask your doctor whether it could cause constipation.