

Constipation

Constipation refers to bowel movements that are infrequent or hard to pass. It is normal to pass a stool one or more times a day but you can be regarded as being constipated if you don't poo at least three times a week, if the poo is difficult to push out causing you to strain, it is painful or if it is hard and dry. The condition affects women twice as much as men and is more common in people over the age of 65. It is a surprisingly common condition and yet easy to treat.

Some of the causes and risks include:

- Insufficient fibre intake
- Insufficient fluid intake
- Decreased liver/bile function
- Lack of a healthy microbiome balance
- Lack of exercise
- Anxiety
- Pregnancy
- Side effects of certain pharmaceutical medications
- Food sensitivities

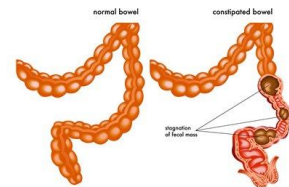
Complications:

- Haemorrhoids which are caused by straining
- Anal fissures which are tears in the skin around the anus
- Rectal prolapse which is a small amount of intestinal lining pushing out
- Loss of bladder control by weakening the pelvic floor muscles as a result of straining
- In severe cases there may be faecal impaction which may result in diarrhoea, ulceration of the colon or intestinal obstruction.
- Constipation creates a chance that toxins may be reabsorbed into your bloodstream cause headaches and nausea.

Suggested home remedies:

You can buy certain over the counter laxative remedies for quick relief but they do the work of the bowel, making it lazy over time, leading to increased constipation. The remedies below, however, encourage the natural detoxification processes of the large intestine and remove the cause of the constipation.

- Increase fluid intake to a minimum of two litres a day (avoid caffeinated drinks due to their diuretic action).
- Regulate eating habits to enable the body to regulate elimination.
- Increase fibre intake (see below)
- Use natural laxatives such as aloe vera juice, prunes, figs, apricots and rhubarb
- Don't resist the urge to defecate.



Supplements:

There are some very helpful supplements that increase intestinal motility. I would advise a consultation with myself or another nutritional therapist to discuss this.

A bit about Fibre

Fibre, as well as aiding elimination, aids the digestion and absorption of nutrients, feeds our microbiome and keeps our intestinal pH in balance. Without adequate fibre in our diet we starve the colonic cells and weaken the integrity of the colon.

There are two type; both are important to health, digestion and prevention:

- Soluble fibre which is found in fruit, beans, peas, barley, rice, flaxseed and psyllium attracts water help to bind bile acids. It regulates cholesterol and blood sugar levels.
- Insoluble fibre which is found in bran, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and carrots, provides bulk to the stool and helps keep us regular as it promotes movement throughout the digestive system.

Most plant-based foods, such as oatmeal and beans, contain both soluble and insoluble fibre. The amount of each type varies in different plant foods, therefore, to receive the greatest health benefit, eat a wide variety of high-fibre foods. If you aren't getting enough fibre each day (most of us eat only half the fibre that our ancestors did), you may need to boost your intake. Good choices include:

- Whole-grain products
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Beans, peas and other legumes
- Nuts and seeds
- Psyllium husks works very well. Begin with 1 teaspoon in water, or a smoothie, and drink quickly before it turns to gel. Make sure you use plenty of water as psyllium absorbs water and could lead to dehydration.

Important note: there are many medical conditions that have the symptoms of constipation such as Irritable Bowel Disease, IBS, Diverticular Disease and even colonic carcinoma. Suffering from constipation does not necessarily mean you have a more serious condition but if you are at all worried, you must visit your GP, particularly if there is blood in the faeces or experience pain during a bowel movement.