

# Constipation and Colon Care

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Constipation is a troublesome condition which saps the health of millions of people. Ideally, bowel movement should be twice a day (one for each main meal), of loose consistency (stools break in water) and of inoffensive odour. An adequate transit time is considered to be between 12 and 24 hours. You can test your own transit time by eating non digestible foods such as corn, whole peanuts or tomato skins and measure the time it takes before it reappears in your stools.

Increased transit time leads to the stools becoming hard and more difficult to pass. Hardened stools indicate that the body has absorbed too much water alongside various toxic substances. This leads to the vicious circle of chronic constipation and its array of unpleasant symptoms such as:

- Coated tongue
- Bad breath
- Headaches / migraines
- Bloating / gas
- Backache
- Lack of energy
- Colic
- Haemorrhoids and varicose veins
- Acne and skin conditions
- Chronic respiratory conditions and mucous build up

If left untreated these symptoms may lead to more serious conditions such as:

- Colitis
- Occlusion
- Diverticulosis / diverticulitis
- Bowel Cancer

Many people use laxatives as a preventative method only to realise that their effects are temporary, leaving them with the side effects associated with laxative abuse such as:

- Irritated (colon) mucosa
- Food allergies
- Inadequate bowel flora
- Depression
- Kidney disease
- Lazy colon and inappropriate muscle tone
- Mineral deficiencies
- Worse constipation

Laxatives are not the answer, and fortunately, constipation can often easily be corrected by adopting the appropriate measures:

## A. Potty training and squatting

Many people have lost all awareness of 'the need to go' due to repeatedly ignoring the call of nature. The best method to retrain yourself is to make a point of every morning of going to the spend 3 to 5 minutes in the bathroom in a squatted position whilst sipping a hot drink. Alternatively, sit on the toilet with your knees higher than your hips and your arms above your head. This can be achieved by raising your feet (ie. On a telephone book) and crossing your hands above your head. These exercises need to be followed regardless of results for at least a month!

**B. Stress management**

Stress has many detrimental effects upon digestion, one of which is constipation.

Avoid eating under stress; better not to eat if you are arguing or in a great hurry. Avoid eating whilst watching TV, listening to the radio or reading. Instead, concentrate on chewing your food and on what you are eating.

Practice a few deep breathing exercises first thing in the morning and last thing at night and set 5 to 10 minutes in your day to sit still and do nothing.

Enrol yourself in a yoga, T'ai Chi or a relaxation class.

**C. Exercise**

Lack of exercise may contribute to constipation.

All abdominal exercises are helpful, particularly on a slanted board as they counteract the negative effect that gravity may have on proper bowel function.

Stretching, especially of the back, abdominal and waist.

Trampolining is a safe and sound form of exercise which contributes to good healthy elimination. Ten minutes twice a day is usually sufficient.

**D. Diet**

Diet is by far the most relevant factor in constipation which is mainly due to lack of water, watery foods and fibres and an excess of refined sugary foods and meat.

Until the conditions improve:

- a) Eat only pure, unprocessed and unrefined foods such as whole grain, nuts, pulses, etc.
- b) Have plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, every day.
- c) Drink plenty of pure water (a glass every hour – buy an egg timer if necessary!) preferably away from food.
- d) Avoid excessive amounts of meat, particularly red meat.
- e) Keep away from dehydrating beverage such as tea, coffee, alcohol and coke.
- f) Avoid / rotate foods or groups of foods you are sensitive to, such as:

- Grains : .....
- Dairy foods : .....
- Yeasted foods : .....
- Other foods : .....

**E. Other useful tips include:**

- a) Ground linseeds (2 parts) mixed with ground sunflower seeds (1 part) and ground pumpkin seeds (1 part) sprinkled liberally over food.

- b) Linseeds soaked overnight in a large glass of water and taken first thing in the morning. As much as two tablespoons twice daily may be used. Both the water and the seeds should be consumed.
- c) Fruits for breakfast particularly soaked prunes and figs.
- d) A tablespoon of strap molasses last thing at night.
- e) Two to three tablespoons of olive oil (or cod liver oil) taken on an empty stomach first thing in the morning mixed with the juice of a lemon or a glass of grapefruit juice.