

Treating Constipation

Constipation is defined as having fewer than three bowel movements in seven days or having difficulty passing stool (hard or painful).

WHAT CAUSES CONSTIPATION?

Certain medications (prescription or over-the-counter) or vitamins

Diets low in fiber

Dehydration

Certain medical conditions

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM CONSTIPATED?

Hydrating adequately is very important.

Make sure that you are staying hydrated with clear decaffeinated fluids. Adequate hydration is consuming 64–80 ounces of clear fluids per day.

Physical activity is essential for regular bowel movements.

- Activity helps move food through the bowel and decreases the amount of water the body absorbs from the stool.
- Aerobic exercise (such as walking or biking) will increase breathing and heart rate to assist with moving the stool out of the bowel more quickly.
- The best time for activity is at least an hour after eating.
 - Activity right after eating will redirect blood flow to the heart and muscles instead of the stomach, which can affect comfort and digestion.
- Aim to walk 10–15 minutes several times per day to maintain regular bowel movements.
- Stretching and yoga can also be helpful to assist movement of stool through the bowel.
- Changing your position in the bathroom during a bowel movement can also help.



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Medications to take for constipation:

- **Colace (docusate) 100 mg, 1 capsule, once or twice a day as needed/or daily.** This medication can be found over the counter. This medication is a stool softener and can be used to help prevent constipation. This medication is safe to take daily.
- **Benefiber 2 teaspoons, as needed (up to 3 times daily).** This medication can be found over the counter. Dissolve 2 teaspoons into 4–8 ounces of sugar-free clear fluids. This medication is a plant-based fiber supplement to prevent constipation. This medication is safe to take daily.
- **Milk of Magnesia 30-60 mL, once daily as needed.** This medication can be found over the counter. This medication is a laxative and should only be used as needed to treat acute constipation (i.e., when you have not had a bowel movement for 2–3 days). This medication works best when taken with 8 ounces of sugar-free clear fluids.
- **Miralax 17 grams of powder, once daily as needed.** This medication can be found over the counter. This medication needs to be dissolved in 4–8 ounces of sugar-free clear fluids. This medication is a laxative.

IF THE ABOVE DOESN'T WORK, TRY:

Daily probiotic supplement

Choose a probiotic that has half or more of its CFUs from Bifidobacterium.

Resource: Constipation - NIDDK (nih.gov)