

NORTH BAY GENERAL SURGERY

Dr. Singh, BSc, MBA, MD, FRCS(C)
Dr. Kumar, MBBS, FRCS(C)
Dr. Niebergall, MD, FRCS(C)
Dr. Menezes, MD, FRCS(C)

107 Shirreff Ave, Suite 206

North Bay ON, P1B 7K8

Phone: 705-472-2646

Website: www.northbaygeneralsurgery.com

E-mail: northbaygeneralsurgery@gmail.com

Managing Constipation

What is Constipation?

Constipation is when it is hard to have bowel movements. Your stool may be:

- Hard and dry
- Difficult and painful to get out
- Happening less than 3 times per week

What Causes Constipation?

Probable causes of constipation may include:

- A low fiber diet
- Not drinking enough fluid
- Not getting enough activity every day
- Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement
- Stress or depression
- Certain medical conditions
- Side effects from some medications or supplements

How do I Prevent Constipation?

Eat enough fiber everyday

Fiber is the part of plant foods that our bodies cannot fully digest, Fiber can help prevent constipation by making stools bulky, soft, and easier to pass.

How much Fiber do I Need?

Age or Group	Men (grams per day)	Women (grams per day)
19-50	38	25
Over 50 years	30	21

What Foods Have Fiber?

Vegetables and Fruit:

- All vegetables and fruit, especially those with skin and seed

Grain Products:

- Breads, cereals, noodles, and other products made with whole grain
- All types of barley, bran, brown rice, buckwheat, cracked wheat, quinoa, and oats.

Meat Alternatives

- Beans, chickpeas, lentils and split peas
- Nuts and seeds such as almonds, chia, flax, hemp seeds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and walnuts

Tips for Increasing your Fiber Intake

- Try to include as many fiber rich foods as you can in meals and snacks
- Eat 7-10 servings of vegetables and fruits
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of wheat bran or ground flax seeds to other foods such as cereal, yogurt or smoothies
- Enjoy a ¼ cup serving of nuts and seeds
- Eat beans, chickpeas, or lentils regularly. One serving is ¾ cup
- Prunes are a natural laxative. Eat 2-3 prunes or drink ½ cup prune juice.
- Your doctor may also suggest a fiber supplement such as Metamucil or Benefiber (1 Tbsp / day)
- Your bowels need time to get used to higher fiber foods. Increase your fiber intake slowly and spread fiber rich foods throughout the day. This will help prevent gas and bloating.
- The Nutritional Facts table shows the amount of fiber in foods. Read the table and try to choose foods with 2g of fiber or more.

Nutrition Facts	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount per serving ½ cup	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily value	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrates 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 3g	12%
Protein 3g	4%
Vitamin A 80%	Vitamin C 80%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%

Drink Enough Fluids Everyday

It is important to drink enough fluid when you eat a higher fiber diet to help stools stay soft. The table shows how much fluid is recommended for adults every day.

Men	Women
12 Cups (3 Liters)	9 cups (2.2 liters)

Tips to Increase your Fluid Intake

- Get most of your fluid by drinking water.
- Limit the amount of caffeine you get per day (coffee, tea, soft drinks) to 1-2 cups per day.
- Avoid alcohol or limit alcohol consumption.
- Fruit juice is low in fiber compared to whole fruit. Limit fruit juice consumption to ½ cup per day.

Be Active Everyday

Daily activity helps to keep your bowels moving regularly. Try to be active for 30 minutes a day, 5-7 days a week.

- Start by doing simple activities like 10 minutes of walking and increase from there.
- Limit the time you spend in front of the tv or computer.

Other Ideas to Help Manage Constipation

- Try to have a bowel movement when you feel the urge. If you ignore this feeling, the stool can become hard and dry, making it difficult to pass.
- The bowels are most active after eating, so eating small meals and snacks throughout the day may help you have a bowel movement more often.
- Buy a small stool or a 'squatty potty' to place in your bathroom. By putting your feet on a stool and elevating your knees it puts your body in a more natural position. This enables easier bowel movements.
- Monitor your food intake, you may find it useful to keep a diary of food, fluid intake, and activity levels to help you find the cause of your constipation.

What about Laxatives?

Most people who have mild constipation do not require any laxatives. The ideal treatment for constipation is diet, fluid, and activity changes.

Laxatives, if required, should not be used for too long, as they can cause the bowel muscle to stop working properly, making the constipation worse. Follow your physician's instructions when using laxatives.

What about Probiotics?

Probiotics are bacteria and yeast that may help balance the bacteria and the bowel to keep it healthy. Probiotics can be found in yogurt.

Some people find that this can help their constipation. There are many different strains of probiotics and more research is needed to determine their usefulness.