

# What is Constipation?

Constipation is a common problem. It affects millions of people around the world. Constipation makes it difficult to pass stool.



## WHAT DOES CONSTIPATION FEEL LIKE?

- Stool that is small, hard or dry
- Stool that is difficult to pass
- Pain while passing stool
- Belly pain, gas, or nausea
- Passing stool only 1 or 2 times a week
- Feeling like your bowel movement is not finished



Everyone has constipation sometimes. Different people experience constipation in different ways. You might not feel the same as someone else with constipation.

## WHAT CAUSES CONSTIPATION?

Constipation can happen for many reasons. For some people, more than one thing causes it.

- Not eating enough fiber
- Not drinking enough water
- Not moving the body enough
- Taking certain medications
- Having other medical conditions

## WHEN SHOULD I SEE A HEALTH PROVIDER?

- If you have constipation for weeks or months
- If you see blood on the stool or toilet paper
- If it is very painful for you to pass stool
- If you are constipated and losing weight without trying

## HOW CAN I PREVENT CONSTIPATION?

- Eat more fiber** (goal 20-35 grams a day)
  - Fruits
  - Vegetables, legumes
  - Whole grains
- Eat on a regular schedule**
- Drink more water** (at least 2 liters a day)



- Set up a regular, relaxing time for yourself to use the bathroom**, in the morning after you wake up, or right after eating a meal
- Give yourself plenty of time in the bathroom**—don't rush!
- Exercise**—moving your body can help move the stool through your gut

## HOW CAN I TREAT CONSTIPATION?

The following natural treatments might help with your constipation. If you take medications or have other medical problems, talk to your doctor about trying these treatments.

### **Fiber supplements**

- Psyllium
- Flaxseed
- Glucomannan



### **Laxatives** – these can

make the bowels move faster. There are different kinds of laxatives.

- “osmotic” laxatives like magnesium** work by helping pull water into the gut to make stools softer. These are very safe.
- “stimulant” laxatives like senna work by causing the muscles in the gut to contract. These can work well but** you can become dependent on them which is not healthy for you

### **Probiotics** – bacteria that is friendly to the gut

- Bifidobacterium animalis
- Lactobacillus rhamnosus

### **Biofeedback** can help coordinate the muscles in your pelvic area to make it easier to pass stool

### **Acupuncture** can sometimes help with constipation.



For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/constipation](http://nciph.org/constipation)



