

# Constipation & PD

## Tips for prevention and management



**This is a very common symptom but it can be hard to get help.** It's embarrassing and you may not feel comfortable talking to your family or caretaker about it.

There are ways to help and make it easier. This is something that is normal and it happens to many people, they just don't want to talk about it. If you need further resources or it is causing you extreme pain, talk to your doctor.

Just like training for a race, your bowels need to be trained to get into a proper routine. This can take 4-12 weeks, so be patient if you don't see immediate changes! The key is to be consistent in your diet and exercise in order to train your bowels to a new pattern.

*Constipation happens to many people, but there are lots of ways to try to manage it.*

### Diet

- Eat fibre-rich foods such as vegetables (beans, peas, lentils), fruit (prunes, dried fruit, bananas, apples, berries), whole grains, bran and nuts.
- Increasing fibre-rich foods is the best way to get more fibre; however, you can supplement your diet with bulk formers like Metamucil, Benefibre, Prodiem or fibre pills.
- Use "laxative jam"
  - 1 cup chopped pitted prunes
  - 1 cup chopped dates
  - 1 cup water
  - Boil together until thick
  - Your "jam" is now ready to use and should be stored in the refrigerator

**IMPORTANT!** *If you are increasing the fibre in your diet, be sure to introduce it gradually and always make sure you are drinking enough fluids or you will get more constipated!*

## Fluid Intake

- Drinking plenty of fluids (8 - 10 glasses) throughout the day is important. If you have increased your fibre, you need fluid to help it work. Any fluid will work – water, soup, tea, fruit juice. Remember that fizzy drinks may make you feel bloated and that, for some people, milk may increase constipation.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol which act as diuretics or “water pills”. This can make constipation worse.
- Start the day with a warm drink. This will help get the bowels moving.

## Exercise

Exercise helps to stimulate the bowels for proper action. Aim for at 15 - 30 minutes of exercise a day.

## Good Bowel Routine

- People often ignore the urge to empty their bowels. This should be avoided. Most people have
- the urge to void first thing in the morning. Establish a routine that will encourage a bowel movement:
  - o Have a warm drink first.
  - o Take your time. If you are not relaxed it will be hard for your bowels to open!
  - o Position yourself in a way to encourage expulsion of stool.
    - Sit on the toilet with your elbows on your knees and lean forward.
    - Placing your feet up on a little step-stool may also help.
- Stool softeners, such as Colace (Docusate), do exactly that! Soft stool is easy to pass and avoids excessive straining during a bowel movement. They can be used daily if needed.
- Laxatives, suppositories, enemas – Consult your healthcare team for direction if you want to use these for constipation. It may be tempting to use laxatives, suppositories and enemas; however it is better to try to avoid them as they may be habit forming. Long-term use may result in your bowels becoming dependent on them and even causing damage to the lining of the intestines.

PD is in your life and constipation can add to the challenge of living well. If, despite all your efforts, constipation remains a challenge, ask for a referral to a dietician. Meal plans and strategies from a dietician may be very helpful.