

FEMALE UROLOGY

O F N A S H V I L L E

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Constipation

- Constipation is defined as having fewer than 3 stools per week.
- Dry hard stools, small stools, painful or incomplete defecation or straining to can also feel like constipation.
- Chronic constipation may lead to nerve, tissue and muscle damage of the pelvic floor.
- Constipation can contribute to urinary tract infections, urinary incontinence, urinary retention and pelvic organ prolapse and must be addressed to completely treat these issues.

Helpful Tips to Prevent Constipation:

- Avoid the chronic use of laxatives and enemas because your bowel can become dependent upon them.
- These things promote healthy bowel function:
 - Sufficient dietary fiber and water intake
 - Sufficient physical activity and exercise
 - Probiotics
- **Dietary fiber** can be found in foods such as: beans, dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, carrots, bran cereals, dried fruit (apricots, figs and dates are best), plums, pears, bananas and apples. It can also be found in fiber supplements such as: Metamucil, FiberCon, Citrucel or Benefiber. Make sure to drink plenty of water when taking fiber supplements.
- **Fluid intake** is an important part of preventing and treating constipation in order to help keep the stools soft. You should be drinking approximately 64 ounces or 8 cups per day. WATER IS BEST! If you also have a problem with frequency or urgency of urination, you may need to adjust this fluid intake based on your symptoms.
- **Probiotics** are live microorganisms such as Lactobacillus that is found in the intestine and vagina naturally. When ingested, probiotics may improve the balance of the intestinal bacteria and improve bowel regularity. Probiotics can be found in food or oral capsules.
 - Foods containing probiotics: yogurt (watch the sugar!), apple cider vinegar, dark chocolate, cultured cottage cheese, garlic, kefir, kimchi, kombucha tea, mango, miso, pickles (watch the salt!), sauerkraut, fresh sourdough bread, tempeh
 - Probiotic capsules: VSL-3, BlueBiotics Ultimate Care, Ultimate Flora Critical Care, Florastor, Restora, Align, Trubiotics or ask your pharmacist for their recommendation.
- **Physical activity** should be 30 minutes, 3-5 times per week.

Helpful Tips to Treat Constipation:

- A daily stool softener may help, such as docusate sodium (Colace) or Miralax (1-4 capfuls). They can be taken once or twice daily.
- Milk of Magnesia, Dulcolax or Fleet enemas can be used sparingly if it has been 3 or more days since a bowel movement. These products should not be used on a daily basis.

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