

How to manage and prevent constipation

Preventing Constipation

Although constipation is common, you can take several steps to prevent it including making diet and lifestyle changes. Examples of these simple changes are listed below.

Fibre

Make sure you have enough fibre in your diet. Most adults do not eat enough fibre. You should have approximately 18g of fibre a day. Pre-packed foods usually state the amount of fibre they contain on the label but as a guide, a slice of wholemeal bread, an apple with the skin on or a banana contain about 2g of fibre each. You can increase your fibre intake by eating more of the following:

Fruit

Vegetables

Wholegrain rice (you could try using half white and half wholegrain to get used to the taste) Whole-wheat pasta

Wholemeal bread

Seeds

Nuts

Oats



Eating more fibre will keep your bowel movements regular because it helps food pass through your digestive system more easily. Foods high in fibre also make you feel fuller for longer. Make sure you drink plenty of fluids to help your body to process the fibre. If you are increasing your fibre intake, it is important to increase it gradually. A sudden increase may make you feel bloated. You may also produce more flatulence (wind) and have stomach cramps.



Fluids

Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration and steadily increase your intake when you are exercising or when it is hot. Try to cut back on the amount of caffeine, alcohol and fizzy drinks that you consume.



Toilet habits

Never ignore the urge to go to the toilet. Ignoring the urge can significantly increase your chances of having constipation. The best time for you to pass stools is first thing in the morning, or about 30 minutes after a meal.

When you use the toilet, make sure you have enough time and privacy to pass stools comfortably.

Exercise

Keeping mobile and active will greatly reduce your risk of getting constipation. Ideally, do at least 150 minutes of physical activity every week.

Not only will regular exercise reduce your risk of becoming constipated, but it will also leave you feeling healthier and improve your mood, energy levels and general fitness.

This information is taken from the NHS Choices website, for more information about constipation visit the website at Constipation - Prevention - NHS Choices