

To obtain further information or help with any constipation questions contact your doctor or

Stomal Therapy Nurse

Name:

Phone:

Hours:

**The information in this brochure has been developed as a general guide only.*

If constipation occurs suddenly or persists, your concerns need to be discussed with your doctor.

A guide to preventing constipation



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Stoma / Wound / Continence

Prepared as a guide by the:
Australian Association of
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Education and Professional
Development Subcommittee

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Level IV Evidence (Expert Opinion)

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What Is Constipation?

- Constipation occurs when the bowel motions become harder or drier than usual. The motion is then harder to pass
- The number of times a healthy person uses their bowel varies greatly. This can range from 3 times per day to 3 times per week

Causes of Constipation

- Not drinking enough fluids
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of fibre in your diet
- Travel
- Ignoring the urge to go to the toilet
- Some medications and medical conditions
- Emotional upsets or stress
- Poor toilet facilities
- Continual use of laxatives – these may interfere with the normal functioning of your bowel and may cause your bowel to become dependent on them

How to Regulate Your Bowel Actions

- Eat regular meals
- Chew your food thoroughly and slowly
- Drink 2 litres (6 – 8 glasses) of fluid per day
- Exercise daily
- Increase the amount of fibre in your diet
- Go to the toilet when you have a strong urge

Exercise

- Exercise daily, for example walking, swimming or cycling
- If you are chair bound you can still exercise many muscles – seek guidelines from a physiotherapist or doctor

Fibre

- It is recommended that you eat between 30 – 40 grams of fibre each day
- Fibre is found in fresh fruit, vegetables, nuts and grains
- It is important to drink 6 – 8 glasses per day when eating extra fibre
- **Do not overdose on fibre as this can increase constipation and is only minimally effective in chronic constipation**

Fluids

- A cup of hot water first thing in the morning helps to get the bowel moving
- Drink 2 litres (6 – 8 glasses) of varied fluids per day
- Vary the fluid with water, milk, soups, fruit and vegetable juices
- Avoid caffeine as this can dehydrate. Caffeine will increase your urine output and cups of tea, coffee and cola drinks should not be counted as part of your fluid intake

Sitting on the toilet

- The urge to go to the toilet is usually strongest shortly after a meal
- It is important that your feet can touch the floor
- Lean forward slightly with your elbows resting on your knees
- This position makes bowel actions easier to pass
- Don't strain to pass your motion

What about Laxatives? (Stool softeners)

- Sometimes the above measures are not enough to prevent / relieve constipation and laxatives are required
- Some laxatives can increase constipation if not used correctly. Speak to your doctor or a Stomal Therapy Nurse to obtain advice