

# CONSTIPATION

Constipation is one of the most common disorders of the digestive tract. Constipation refers to the inability to have regular bowel movements on a daily basis. Constipation is often associated with gas, bloating, abdominal discomfort and hemorrhoids.

## **What causes constipation?**

The most common cause of constipation is a low-fibre diet. Other common causes include: stress, not drinking enough water, lack of exercise, low thyroid function, food allergies, or an imbalance of good bacteria in the digestive tract.

## **Natural Treatment:**

A high-fibre diet, drinking plenty of water and regular exercise is an effective prescription in most cases of constipation. High levels of dietary fibre promote regular bowel movements and also decrease the absorption of toxins from the stool. Good sources of fibre include: fresh vegetables, fruit, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

It is important to also reduce intake of low-fibre foods, such as refined carbohydrates (white bread, bagels, muffins, pasta, white rice, pastries) and meat. Many people also experience relief from constipation if they avoid eating milk products. Virtually any food allergy or sensitivity can cause intestinal spasm and constipation.

If you're eating a high-fibre diet yet still experiencing constipation, it may be stress related. When people are under chronic stress, the urge to have a bowel movement is often reduced. Stress management techniques and regular exercise will help.

Replenishing the digestive tract with probiotics can be helpful in regulating the bowels. Be sure to take a substantial dose of a good quality probiotic strain. These can be found in certain concentrated yogurts or in capsule form.

What about Laxatives? If possible, laxative use should be avoided. If absolutely necessary, laxatives should only be used on a very infrequent basis. Regular use of laxatives will cause a "lazy bowel" that is dependent on the strong stimulation of a laxative.

If you're struggling with chronic constipation, a Naturopathic doctor can help identify the cause and prescribe treatments to regulate your bowel function.

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