

**Food Choices to Help
Manage Constipation**

Normal bowel habits can range from one bowel movement every 2-3 days and up to 3 bowel movements each day. Your stools should be soft, easy to pass and not painful. If you need to strain or are having fewer bowel movements compared to your usual pattern, then you may be constipated.

Important Notes:

- **If you have not had a bowel movement for more than 3 days, contact your doctor or nurse before using this handout.**
- **If you have started taking morphine-type medications, food choices alone will not be enough to relieve the constipation. You will need to start on medications to help manage the constipation.**

Drink more fluid

Your body needs liquids to help keep your stools soft.

- Drink at least eight cups (2 litres) of fluid each day. Most foods that are liquid at room temperature such as milk, yogurt, soups, and sherbet can be counted towards your total fluid for the day.

Eat foods that are high in fibre

- **If you are at risk for a bowel obstruction or narrowing of the bowel, you may be advised to avoid high fibre foods listed below.**
- Eat foods that contain fibre such as vegetables, fruit, cereals, whole grains and legumes to help keep your stools soft.
- Increase fibre rich foods slowly into your diet and make sure to drink lots of fluid to prevent increased gas, bloating and cramps.

Simple ways to include fibre into your diet:

- Choose high fibre fruits and vegetables more often such as berries, pears, apples, avocado, peas, spinach or broccoli
- Add wheat bran, oat bran or ground flax seeds into smoothies, hot cereal or into muffin or pancake batter
- Use lentils and beans in soups and stews
- Choose whole grain foods such as brown rice, whole wheat bread and quinoa
- Choose high fibre breakfast cereals (read food labels for those that have more than 5 grams fibre per serving)
- Use whole fruit or vegetables to make smoothies instead of juice
- Try to have at least 7 servings of fruits and vegetables daily

Include natural laxative foods

Include natural laxative foods such as prunes, prune juice, papayas, pears, apples, dried apricots and rhubarb. Try this natural laxative fruit spread recipe:

Fruit Lax Recipe:

- 1/4 cup of pitted dates
- 1 cup prune nectar or orange juice
- 1/4 cup figs
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup pitted prunes
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Optional ingredients:

Dried sour cherries, dried cranberries, flaked coconut, orange juice, wheat bran, orange zest

- -Place everything in a saucepan and simmer on low heat for 20 minutes or until the fruit is very soft. Add extra juice if the mixture becomes dry. Let it cool.
- -Put the mixture in a food processor or blender and pulse until smooth. You may need to add extra liquid if the mixture is too thick to blend.
- Enjoy fruit lax on its own or serve it on toast, hot cereal, crackers or ice-cream. Start with 1 tablespoon each day and increase as desired.
- -Store in the refrigerator and use within 2 weeks

This information is not meant to replace the medical counsel of your doctor or individual consultation with a registered dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety
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Other tips:

- If your appetite is poor and you are eating smaller amounts of foods at meals, then include more nutritious liquids often through the day such as: milkshakes, hot chocolate, milk cream soup, soy milk, fruit juice, smoothies, and nutritional supplement drinks.
- Have small frequent meals and snacks at the same time everyday
- Chew your food well
- Warm or hot liquids may also help you to have a bowel movement
- Specific foods such as cheese and milk do not cause constipation
- Do not ignore 'the feeling' to have a bowel movement. Try to go to the bathroom and allow lots of time so you are not feeling rushed
- Do light exercise such as a short walk or stretching after your meal

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