

What are the symptoms?

- Less than normal number of bowel movements per week
- Lumpy or hard stools
- Straining during bowel movement
- Bloating
- Pain with bowel movements
- Abdominal cramping/Gas pains

Constipation means having fewer bowel movements than usual or having trouble passing stool. It often involves hard, dry, or painful stools and may leave you feeling like you didn't fully empty your bowels. Most people experience it occasionally, and it's usually temporary.

How do I feel better?

- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Go to the bathroom when you feel the urge - don't hold it in.
- Get regular physical exercise.
- Increase the amount of fiber (20 to 35 g/day) in your diet. Increase slowly - start with 5 g/day and increase by 5 g/week.
- High fiber foods: prunes, dates, kiwi, dragon fruit, apples, peaches, cherries, legumes, whole grains, broccoli.
- If you need immediate relief, short term use of an over-the-counter laxative containing polyethylene glycol (PEG), such as (Miralax®) can help.
- Other bulk-forming laxatives, such as Metamucil, Benefiber, Citrucel, FiberCon, may also be used. These include natural fiber and commercial fiber preparations to aid in constipation.

Seek medical treatment if:

- Blood in your stool
- Worsening abdominal pain and/or vomiting
- Severe pain with bowel movements
- Constipation for 3 weeks or more, despite increasing fiber and making lifestyle changes