

Potty Pointers

Concerned About Constipation?

Nearly everyone becomes constipated at one time or another. Constipation is a symptom, not a disease. There is no right number of daily or weekly bowel movements; however, not eliminating wastes from your body can lead to health problems.

Are you constipated?

If you answer “yes” to one or more of the following questions, you may have a problem:

- Do you often have fewer than three bowel movements a week?
- Do you usually have a difficult time passing stools?
- Are stools often lumpy or hard?
- Do you have a feeling of being blocked or of not having fully emptied your bowels?



Treatment

If you think you are constipated, try the following suggestions:

- Add fiber to your diet by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, either cooked or raw, and more whole-grain cereals and breads. Dried fruits, such as apricots, prunes, and figs, are high in fiber.
- If your diet does not include natural fiber, you may need to add a small amount of bran to baked goods, cereal, and fruit.
- Be sure to get enough fluids. Without fluids, constipation can get worse. Drinking enough water and juice can help you have regular bowel movements. You should drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day.
- Stay active and exercise! Inactivity may cause constipation.

When to see the doctor

If the above does not get things moving, see your doctor to rule out a disease or blockage. Other related reasons to see your doctor include:

- Your bowel habits change
- There is blood in your stool
- You are having serious stomach pains
- You lose weight without trying
- Fiber and exercise has not helped your constipation