

A GUIDE TO

Help address constipation

PHASE 1

Is it the medications?

Many medications cause constipation. It's a good idea to check with your doctor to see if any of yours might be the cause and whether there's a different option that won't have this effect.

Common medications that cause constipation:

Antihistamines, antispasmodics, antidepressants, antipsychotics, iron supplements, calcium supplements, antacids, barium, opiates, antihypertensives, ganglionic blockers, vinca alkaloids, calcium channel blockers, and 5-HT₃ antagonists.

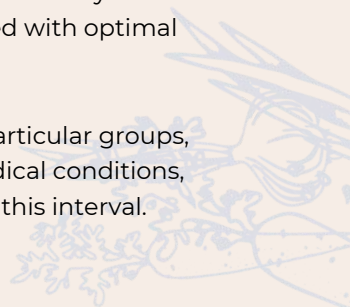


Is your thyroid, or another condition, slowing down motility?

Thyroid function plays a vital role in bowel motility, as hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) can slow down digestive processes and lead to constipation. Ensuring optimal thyroid hormone levels supports normal gastrointestinal transit and helps prevent constipation associated with thyroid dysfunction.

Thyroid function should be assessed by checking TSH, Free T₃, and T₄ levels. Data indicate that maintaining TSH levels within the range of 0.4 to 2.5 mIU/L—and aiming for values between approximately 1.0 to 1.2 mIU/L in healthy adults—is generally associated with optimal thyroid function.

Specific reference ranges may be recommended for particular groups, such as pregnant individuals or those with certain medical conditions, who may require different target values within or near this interval.



PHASE 2

Establish regularity

The digestive system benefits from routine. Regular mealtimes, sleep and toileting can all promote natural gut rhythms. Assess your daily habits and make adjustments to encourage predictable timing around eating, sleeping, and toileting.

Create a toilet routine

Sit on the toilet for 5 mins at the same time every day. Even if you don't need to go, this will help to train your bowels. Only spend a small amount of time on the toilet to avoid stressing your body. If you have not had a movement after 5 minutes, get up and leave. Don't take your phone to the bathroom.

Correct posture

Establish the correct posture for opening your bowels:



Hydration

Stool transit depends on adequate hydration. Begin by noting your current fluid intake; as a basic guideline, try to drink two glasses of water in the morning and continue with two glasses at each meal (before, during, or after).

Use public toilets when needed

Avoid delaying the urge to pass a bowel movement, as holding on can disrupt normal bowel rhythms.

Physical movement

Exercise, including a daily walk—especially after meals—can stimulate gut motility. Yoga has also been shown to benefit bowel regularity.

Avoid straining

Breathe deeply and allow your body time to relax. Persistent need for straining may indicate pelvic floor dysfunction requiring professional assessment.



PHASE 3

Further interventions

1. Foods/prebiotic supplements

Introducing new fibre sources gradually is important. Start low and go slow.

Select one (or alternate between them) from the options below to introduce, as it is best not to add excessive fibre until regular bowel movements are established. Once bowel movements are regular, you may continue using these options to help maintain progress.

- Kiwi fruit (with or without skin). Start with one and increase to two.
- Ground flaxseed—begin with a small amount, working up to four tablespoons a day.
- Chia seeds—use one tablespoon soaked in water (taking dry can worsen constipation).
- Prunes or prune juice.
- Oats (check with your healthcare professional before adding if you are monitoring blood glucose).
- Prebiotic fibre supplements are best used under the guidance of a professional

2. Dietary adjustments

Minimise or avoid alcohol, processed, and high-fat foods, as these slow transit and can worsen constipation.

3. Medications

Doctors may prescribe pharmaceutical aids to initiate bowel movement if necessary. These should be used as a temporary measure and only as directed.



Maintaining progress

Once regular bowel function has been achieved, continue daily practices and gradually increase fibre by 5–10 grams per week after one to two weeks of regular movements. Maintain established routines around toilet timing, meals, hydration, sleep, and exercise.

If, despite following these steps, constipation persists, further medical investigation is warranted.

3 SIMPLE WAYS TO SUPPORT DIGESTION

1. Regular exercise

Regular exercise supports bowel movements, with particular benefit from activity after meals.



2. Hydration

Increasing fluid intake is essential when increasing dietary fibre.



3. Simple swaps

Swap high-fat and processed foods for whole foods, to decrease the risk of constipation and help support gut health.





Medical disclaimer

This information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any medical condition. The strategies and advice described here are general and should not be used as a substitute for consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

Any changes in bowel movements, including prolonged constipation, should be promptly discussed with your doctor, who will determine if further evaluation or medical intervention is needed.

Constipation can and should be medically confirmed using appropriate diagnostic imaging, such as an abdominal X-ray or CT scan. Your doctor is responsible for specifying “rule out constipation” on the imaging request to ensure accurate assessment.

Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding constipation, gut health, or any medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of information provided in this protocol.