



Tips For Those Experiencing Constipation

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Nutrition is very important during cancer treatment. Consuming enough calories and protein in your diet will help your body maintain strength and energy levels, fight infections, recover faster, and improve your tolerance to treatment.

Unfortunately, cancer treatment can cause side effects that may affect your ability to do so. For example, a low appetite, fatigue, taste changes, and pain can make preparing meals or finding foods you enjoy eating difficult.

Patients may also experience constipation which may be related to certain medications, changes in diet, dehydration, or less physical activity. Constipation can cause bloating, gas, abdominal pain or discomfort, and nausea or vomiting, which can affect your nutrition and overall well-being. Follow the tips below to help relieve constipation.

Drink plenty of fluids

Dehydration causes hard, dry, lumpy stools that are difficult to pass, so it's important to make sure you are staying hydrated.

- ▶ Drink at least 8 cups (64 oz) of fluid per day
 - You may need more depending on how much fiber you typically consume in a day
- ▶ Types of fluids to drink:
 - Water = best
 - Prune juice = natural laxative
 - Alternative options: Non-carbonated, sugar-free, and decaffeinated fluids
 - ▶ Warm juices
 - ▶ Decaffeinated tea
 - ▶ Hot, sugar-free lemonade
 - ▶ Heated broth
 - ▶ Sugar-free Jell-O
 - ▶ Water infused with slices of fruit

Note: Drinking a hot beverage first thing in the morning may help relieve constipation



Consume a balanced diet with adequate fiber

Aim for:



Women: 25 grams of fiber per day



Men: 38 grams of fiber per day

Increase your fiber intake gradually to avoid abdominal discomfort and gas

- Increase by 5 g/day as tolerated until your goal is reached
- Increase your fluid intake as you increase your fiber intake. Not doing so can worsen constipation



How do I monitor my fiber intake?

- Read the Nutrition Facts label on packaged food items to see how much fiber is in one serving
- Choose products with at least 4 grams of fiber per serving
- Compare food labels of alike packaged items at the grocery store and choose the one with the highest amount of fiber per serving
- Keep a food journal or use a calorie-tracking app on your mobile device or computer such as MyFitnessPal

| Nutrition Facts | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 8 servings per container | |
| Serving size | 2/3 cup (55g) |
| Amount per serving | |
| Calories | 230 |
| % Daily Value* | |
| Total Fat 8g | 10% |
| Saturated Fat 1g | 5% |
| <i>Trans Fat</i> 0g | |
| Cholesterol 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium 160mg | 7% |
| Total Carbohydrate 57g | 13% |
| Dietary Fiber 4g | 14% |
| <i>Total Sugars</i> 12g | |
| Includes 10g Added Sugars 20% | |
| Protein 3g | |
| Vitamin D 2mcg | 10% |
| Calcium 260mg | 20% |
| Iron 8mg | |
| Potassium 240mg | |

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

High-fiber foods:

- Wheat flour
- Whole grain or whole wheat bread
- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Whole wheat pasta
- Oatmeal
- Barley
- Farro
- Bran cereal
- Beans and legumes
 - black beans, pinto beans, white beans, chickpeas, lentils, etc.
- Nuts and seeds
 - almonds, walnuts, peanuts, chia seeds, flax seeds, etc.
- Fruits
 - apples, berries, apricots, mangos, pears, avocados, oranges, prunes etc.
- Vegetables
 - asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, eggplant, etc.



Consume a balanced diet with adequate fiber

Ways to add fiber into your daily diet:

- Choose whole-grain products, like brown rice, quinoa, oats, and whole-wheat bread or pasta instead of refined grains like white flour, white bread, and white rice
- Fill ½ your plate with different colored fruits and vegetables at every meal
- Include those with edible skins - the skin contains a lot of fiber
- Make fruit smoothies or blended vegetable soups to increase your daily intake of fruits & veggies
- Incorporate more legumes such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas in your diet by adding them to soups, salads, stews, and casseroles
- Add nuts and seeds to your diet by
 - Adding walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, or sunflower seeds to a salad
 - Blending ground flax seeds or chia seeds in a smoothie
 - Spreading nut butter on whole grain bread
 - Sprinkling nuts and seeds on top of yogurt or oatmeal
 - Making your own granola or trail mix
 - Coating fish, chicken, or tofu with crushed nuts and seeds before baking or pan-frying for a nutritious crust



Avoid

- Skipping meals, especially breakfast
- Fighting the urge to go to the bathroom



Exercise

Physical activity helps keep your bowels moving

- Ask your healthcare team about exercises you can do
- Try to participate in some exercise everyday, even if it's a little



Other tips

- Maintain a consistent schedule for eating and bathroom breaks
- Add unprocessed bran to foods. Start with 1 teaspoon of bran added to cereal
- Eat a few dried or stewed prunes or drink prune juice
- Eat 2 kiwi fruits a day



Communicate with your healthcare team

- Keep open communication with your healthcare team about your symptoms. Ask them about the use of stool softeners and laxatives
- Talk to your doctor or nurse before taking any medications or supplements for constipation
- Make sure you are taking all medications and supplements for constipation as you are prescribed



Disclaimer: Please note that the information provided herein is intended to serve as a general guideline and may not meet the unique nutritional needs of individual patients. The distribution of these materials is at the discretion of the physician. The creator does not hold responsibility for their application or outcomes on individual health conditions. All patients are advised to consult with their physician for personalized advice tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.