

Constipation

Occasional constipation is very common and can be treated without seeing a medical provider ...

Constipation is a significant decrease in a person's normal number of bowel movements and may also include the difficult passage of stools. It may be caused by many factors including diet, lifestyle, and/or medications.

Symptoms

- Fewer than normal number of bowel movements per week
- Lumpy or hard stools
- Straining during a bowel movement

Self-care measures

- Eat high fiber foods combined with increased fluid intake.
- Aim for 25 grams of fiber each day (high fiber foods include raw fruits and vegetables; whole grains like oatmeal, bran, whole-wheat, and popcorn; and nuts/seeds).
- Use fiber supplements containing Psyllium.
- Drink 1.5–2.0 liters (50–68 ounces) of non-alcoholic/non-caffeine fluids per day.
- Use a non-prescription stool softener containing Docusate Sodium (Colace®).
- Use a non-prescription laxative containing polyethylene glycol (PEG) (Miralax®).
- Avoid frequent use of stimulant laxatives such as Ex-Lax®, Correctol®, Dulcolax®, and Feen-a-mint® (overuse may cause the colon to become dependent upon these medications).

(over)

When to seek care from a medical provider

- If you have symptoms of constipation and a fever
- If you have symptoms of constipation and nausea/vomiting
- If you have changes in bowel habits that last more than 3 months and that are not explained by a change in diet or medication
- If you lose more than 10 pounds without trying

To make an appointment at Cornell Health, call 607-255-5155 during business hours, or go to myCornellHealth (from *health.cornell.edu*) and find a time that works for you.

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