

Constipation?

What does it mean to be “regular”? This is different for everyone, however technically speaking constipation is any disruption in your typical rhythm that feels uncomfortable. Ideally we should be aiming for between 1-3 times per day, any more than this could show there is a problem, likewise any less than 3 times per week.

What should our poo look like? People don't often talk about this but it really tells us a lot. Poo should not only be frequent, but also easy to pass, soft and smooth. Generally speaking most poo has an unpleasant smell, however if, it's extremely foul-smelling, it would be good to get it checked. The colour should be brown, or dark brownish-greenish colour if you eat lots of leafy greens. If there is any blood in the stool it is advisable to check with the doctor.

Even if constipation runs in your family or you have a highly sensitive or stubborn system, you don't have to give in to feeling of constipation.

Causes & tips for relief

Not enough fibre. Fibrous foods are needed at almost every meal, which include a mix of both insoluble fibre (whole grains, nuts, seeds and fruit and vegetable skins), and soluble fibre (chia seeds, flax seeds, oats, beans, lentils and strawberries). Get a fibre supplement from your local health food shop if your diet doesn't provide enough.

Not enough fluid. Water is essential to hydrate your high-fibre bowel movements. Dehydration results in the stool being hard and difficult to pass.

Not enough exercise. Exercise encourages the motion of peristalsis (movement) through the colon, which is what is required to pass the stool. At least 20 minutes a day of low impact aerobic activity like walking, jogging, dancing or jumping will help.

Out-of-balance bacteria. Too little good bacteria in the intestines can create an environment which does not allow for healthy fermentation of food, thus poor stool formation. Daily probiotics and prebiotics not only ease up constipation, but also reduce bloating, gas and even help reduce anxiety and depression. The supermarket yogurts don't contain enough probiotics. Get a good quality capsule form and also make fermented foods like sauerkraut and kefir part of your weekly meal plan.

Prescription drugs and antacids. These medicines can slow down your digestion thus resulting in constipation. Low stomach acid can make it difficult to break down foods in the stomach; eating bitter foods prior to the meal such as rocket with lemon juice can improve this.

Overusing laxatives. Even too much natural senna can lead to dependence and constipation. The movement of the stool through the colon is achieved through muscles, so if these are not being used, they can become weak. Prunes and hot water with lemon juice first thing in the morning would be a suitable alternative.

If constipation is an issue for you, don't suffer in silence. Come and see the Nutrition Detectives to get a test to assess your digestive health and leave with a prescription as well as recipe ideas to help with your symptoms.



The Nutrition Detectives

Lise Matthews (Tel: 07811 074068) & Amy Desborough (Tel: 07975 518036)
The Ark Clinic, 11 Quay Street, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire SA61 1BG
email@nutritiondetectives.co.uk www.nutritiondetectives.co.uk