

CONSTIPATION

Constipation is common in older adults. Symptoms include: passing fewer than three bowel movements a week, stools that are difficult to pass, feeling that not all the stool has passed, and hard stools. As people age, the colon becomes longer and slower. Eating low-fiber diets, not drinking enough fluids, and decreased activity all contribute to constipation. The function of the colon is to remove liquid from the slurry that enters from the small intestine to the colon. This roughage-diminished slurry, passing through a longer and slower colon, becomes desiccated, hard balls of feces that are difficult to form into stools and difficult to pass. Narcotics, calcium, iron supplements, and other medicines may contribute to the problem.

Prevention:

1. Eat more roughage found in high-fiber foods: whole grain bread, oatmeal, bran, lentils, beans, fruits, vegetables and nuts.
2. Drink plenty of water, and other liquids.
3. Be physically active. Take walks.
4. If additional measures are needed, add Miralax and Benefiber or Metamucil as follows: Add one teaspoon of Miralax and one teaspoon of Benefiber or Metamucil to four ounces of water. Miralax retains water in the colon, and Benefiber or Metamucil, mixed in water, allow the residue of your meal to be formed into soft stool you can pass. Drink this mixture once a day with your largest meal. After several days your stools should pass more easily. If they are still hard, or become loose, adjust the amount of Miralax and Benefiber or Metamucil by ½ teaspoon each and take for three days before making additional adjustments. Take the dose that works for you once a day.

Treatment:

If you remain constipated after taking the Miralax and Benefiber or Metamucil combination, drink up to a 10-ounce bottle of Citrate of Magnesium and an 8 ounce glass of water. If you don't have a bowel movement within six hours, drink a second 10-ounce bottle of Citrate of Magnesium along with another 8 ounces of water and administer a Fleets enema. This should relieve your constipation. Stay hydrated and continue daily physical activity. Wait a day, and then begin following the suggestions listed under *Prevention*. *If constipation persists, you see blood in your stool, or experience nausea, vomiting or abdominal pain, call or see your doctor immediately.*

Miralax, Benefiber, Metamucil, Citrate of Magnesium, and Fleets Enema are found in most drug and grocery stores.

Revised October 17, 2018