

Constipation.

Constipation is when poo is very hard and difficult to pass. It can be uncomfortable and affect our appetite and ability to move. Constipation can be a side effect of certain diseases (e.g. bowel cancer), some medications (e.g. strong pain relief) and treatments (e.g. chemotherapy drugs). Changing what we eat is not usually helpful for these causes of constipation. The recommendation is to:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Take regular laxative medication as prescribed

Other causes of constipation

Constipation can also be caused by not having enough fluid or fibre, or not being active enough. For these causes, try the tips below to help treat constipation and prevent it from happening in the future.

Fibre

Eating more fibre-rich foods can help with constipation. Fibre can be found in foods such as:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Wholegrain foods like brown rice and grainy bread
- Beans, lentils and peas
- Nuts and seeds
- Porridge and oats
- Psyllium husk (available in the cereal aisle)
- Supplements like Benefibre and Metamucil



It's very important that you increase fibre slowly and drink plenty of water. Fibre absorbs water from the gut, making a soft poo. If there is not enough water, the poo will be hard.



The bowels can become very sensitive during some kinds of treatment. Increasing the amount of fibre can make things worse. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about this, especially if you've had bowel surgery.

Fluid

Drinking enough fluid is really important. It is especially important to drink enough when increasing fibre. **A lot of fibre and not enough water can make constipation worse.**

The right amount of fluid is different for everyone. Try about 2 litres (8 cups) every day. Water is the best drink, but all fluids count. Using one specific jug or bottle can help us to track how much we drink. Seeing the bottle or jug can also be a good reminder to drink.

If drinking water is challenging, try tea, coffee, milk, cordial, juice, and even soup and jelly. They all count as fluids too, as they're mostly water.

Movement

Doing some gentle exercise (like walking or stretching) can help get our gut moving and bring on the urge to go to the toilet.

Routine

Getting into a routine and having your meals and snacks at regular times may also help.

