

Constipation

Constipation occurs when it is difficult to pass a bowel movement (poop), and/or bowel movements occur less often than your normal frequency. Constipation is commonly caused by not eating enough fiber or not drinking enough fluids. It can also be a side effect of some medications.



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What to Expect

Here are some of the symptoms you might have:

- Bowel movements that are difficult to pass (straining).
- Pain with bowel movements.
- Bowel movements that occur less often than usual.
- A feeling of incomplete emptying.
- It takes a long time on the toilet to pass the stool.
- Stool that looks hard, lumpy or small.



When to Get Help

Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre if:

- There is blood in the toilet, or on the toilet paper after passing a bowel movement.
- Your stool is dark black or looks like tar.
- You have a fever (temperature greater than 38°C).
- You have intense or worsening abdominal or rectal pain.
- You are vomiting.
- You have a complete inability to pass stool for several days.
- You feel weak or dizzy.

To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca.

Recommended Follow-Up

- Follow up in ___ days.**

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

- _____
- _____



How to Care for Yourself at Home

Activity

- Exercise regularly.
- Pay attention to your body's signals to poop. Don't hold in bowel movements.
- Supporting your feet with a small step stool when sitting on the toilet can help you pass a bowel movement.



Diet

- Eat a high fiber diet. Examples include fruits, vegetables, prunes, prune juice, artichokes, oatmeal, bran cereal, and whole grain bread.
- If you are also bloated, do not drastically increase fiber intake right away. Start with a lower amount of fiber and then gradually increase your fiber intake to prevent gas and bloating.
- Drink lots of water and fluids.
- Drinking a hot caffeinated beverage in the morning can help stimulate a bowel movement.



Medication

Your pharmacist or doctor may have suggested you take a laxative. Over the counter laxatives include polyethylene glycol (PEG, Restorolax[®], Lax-a-Day[®]), magnesium compounds (Milk of Magnesia), psyllium (brand name Metamucil[®]), and Lactulose. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor to find out which one is best for you.



Notes:

Additional Information

Tell Us What You Think!

Have feedback about this document? Use the form at: bit.ly/pdsfeedback



Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/constipation/

The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.



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Provincial Health Services Authority

EmergencyCareBC.ca