

Constipation: After Your Visit

Your Care Instructions

Constipation means that you have a hard time passing stools (bowel movements). People pass stools from 3 times a day to once every 3 days. What is normal for you may be different. Constipation may occur with pain in the rectum and cramping. The pain may get worse when you try to pass stools. Sometimes there are small amounts of bright red blood on toilet paper or the surface of stools because of enlarged veins near the rectum (hemorrhoids).

A few changes in your diet and lifestyle may help you avoid ongoing constipation. Your doctor may also prescribe medicine to help loosen your stool.

Some medicines (such as pain medicines or antidepressants) can cause constipation. Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. Your doctor may want to make a medicine change to ease your symptoms.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the amount of fluids you drink.
- Include high-fiber foods, such as fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, in your diet each day.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Take a fiber supplement, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, every day. Start with a small dose and very slowly increase the dose over a month or more.
- Schedule time each day for a bowel movement. A daily routine may help. Take your time having your bowel movement.
- Support your feet with a small step stool when you sit on the toilet. This helps flex your hips and places your pelvis in a squatting position.
- Your doctor may recommend an over-the-counter laxative to relieve your constipation. Examples are Milk of Magnesia and MiraLax. Read and follow all instructions on the label, and do not use laxatives on a long-term basis.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worsening belly pain.
- You have new or worsening nausea or vomiting.
- You have blood in your stools.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your constipation is getting worse.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to www.southdenvergi.com, log into the web portal, and enter P343 in the search box to learn more about Constipation: After Your Visit.

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