



Constipation Brochure

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AFFIX PATIENT ID HERE

Constipation is infrequent, irregular or difficult evacuation of the bowels.

Common causes

Constipation is not always related to an underlying medical condition. It may be caused by:

- Medication – often medications (e.g. pain killers) given during surgery or whilst you are in hospital can lead to constipation
- Surgery (this may or may not be direct bowel surgery)
- Not drinking enough water
- A diet low in fibre (roughage)
- Waiting too long to go to the toilet
- Pregnancy
- Older age
- Chronic illness – including certain bowel conditions and depression
- Changing routine – surgery/travel/less exercise than usual etc.

What are the symptoms?

- Excessive straining to pass a bowel motion
- Hard motions
- No bowel movement for several days
- Cramping stomach pains
- Bloating and flatulence
- Nausea
- Minor bleeding and pain from a tear in the skin around the anus.

There are a few options, and your doctor will choose the right one for you. These medications work in different ways, sometimes you might need to use more than one option.

It is also important to ensure you are drinking adequate amounts of water and eating a well-balanced diet. The treatments should be progressed through from bulking to osmotic until satisfactory result.

Type of treatment	Way the treatment works	Examples
Bulking	Gentlest form of laxative. Increases the “bulk” or weight which in turns stimulates your bowel.	Metamucil or Benefibre.
Softening	Keep the stool soft by drawing water into the colon, allowing it to be easier to pass.	Coloxyl (Docusate)
Stimulant	Increase muscle contractions of the digestive system. *not usually recommended in pregnancy	Coloxyl with senna; Dulcolax (Bisacodyl) Tablets or Suppositories which are inserted into the rectum (into the back passage).
Osmotic	Encourage bowel movements by drawing water from the body into the Intestines, helping to stimulate natural body reflex.	Prune/Pear Juice (1 glass a day); Lactulose; Movicol (Macrogol); Glycerol Suppositories; Enemas such as Microlax, which is a special liquid inserted into the rectum.

Patients who have undergone bowel surgery should manage their bowels as per Doctors orders. Follow your doctor’s or health professional’s advice. Laxatives should only be used for short periods of time, unless otherwise instructed.