

# Constipation

Constipation refers to very hard stools or bowel movements that are hard to pass.

You may also:

- Need to strain
- Feel like you did not completely empty your bowels
- Have cramping, pain, bloating or nausea

Each person is different, but most people pass stools from 3 times each day to 3 times each week. As long as the stool is soft and easy to pass, you are not constipated.

## Causes of Constipation

- A diet that is high in fat and sugar or low in fiber
- Not drinking enough liquids
- Being inactive
- Not going to the toilet when you have the urge to pass stool or have a bowel movement
- Some medicines
- Overuse of laxatives

## To help prevent constipation:

- Drink at least 8-10 cups of liquids each day. Warm or hot drinks may help your bowels move more easily.
- Eat high fiber foods such as bran cereal, whole grain breads, raw vegetables, fresh or dried fruits, nuts and popcorn. Fiber helps move stool through your body.
- You may want to limit cheeses, chocolate and eggs because they may worsen constipation.
- Drink prune or apple juice to help soften stools.
- Exercise to help your bowels move more easily. Walking works well.
- Go to the toilet when you have the urge to have a bowel movement.
- Check with your doctor before using any over the counter laxatives or enemas. Your doctor may suggest a stool softener or a bulk laxative. If you are not getting the results you want, talk to your doctor.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**