

## Lifestyle advice continued...

Eat foods containing plenty of fibre. Fibre from food stays in your gut and adds bulk and softness to the stools.

You may have some bloating and wind at first, and it can take up to four weeks to help your constipation. So it is best to increase your fibre slowly and make it a long term change. You will also need to drink lots of water with your high fibre foods.

*High-fibre foods include:*

- **Fruit and vegetables.** Aim to eat at least five portions of different fruit and vegetables each day
- **Oats, nuts and seeds**
- **Wholegrain cereals, bran and wholemeal pasta, bread etc \***

Sorbitol is a sugar, which soften the stools and acts like a natural laxative. Sorbitol is found in fruits (and juices) such as apples, apricots, gooseberries, grapes (and raisins), peaches, pears, plums, prunes, raspberries and strawberries. The amount of sorbitol is about 5-10 times higher in dried fruit.

\* Sometimes bran and wholemeal may cause more bloating and cramps and worsen constipation in patients with IBS

## More information available at:

[www.patient.co.uk/health/constipation-in-adults-leaflet](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/constipation-in-adults-leaflet)  
[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Constipation](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Constipation)  
[www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org](http://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org)

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# Patient Information leaflet Constipation



## What is constipation?

Constipation is common. Usual symptoms include stools (faeces or motions) becoming hard, and difficult or painful to pass. The time between toilet trips increases compared with your usual pattern. You may also feel bloated and feel sick if you have severe constipation.

### Bristol Stool Chart

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely Liquid

Type 1, 2 or 3 on the Bristol stool chart show some level of constipation, with Type 1 the most severe.

**Note:** there is a large range of normal bowel habit, from 2-3 times per day to 2-3 times per week. It is a **change** from **your** usual pattern and the **hardness** and pain passing the stools that defines constipation.

## What causes constipation?

- **Not eating enough fibre (roughage)** is a common cause (See below)
- **Not drinking enough**, as stools require water to keep them soft and easily passed (See below)
- **Some medicines** can cause constipation as a side-effect. For example, painkillers like co-codamol, codeine and morphine slow down your gut movements, and you may need a laxative to start it moving again. You may wish to check the patient information leaflet or with your Pharmacist.
- **Various medical conditions** can cause constipation. For example, an underactive thyroid, irritable bowel syndrome, and conditions that reduce your mobility and exercise.
- **Pregnancy.** Hormonal changes in pregnancy can slow down the gut movements, and in later pregnancy, the baby pushes the bowels making it more difficult for the stools to move.
- **Unknown cause (idiopathic)** Some people have a good diet, drink a lot of fluid, do not have a disease or take any medication that can cause constipation, but still become constipated. Their bowels are said to be underactive. This is common (up to 1 in 6 people) and mostly occurs in women. This condition starts in childhood or early adulthood, and persists throughout life.

## What can I do to reduce my constipation? (Lifestyle advice)

Have plenty to drink. Aim to drink about 8-10 cups (2 litres) of fluid per day. This will allow some to stay in the gut and soften the stools. Most drinks will do, but alcoholic drinks can be dehydrating.

Exercise regularly. Keeping your body active helps to keep your gut moving. It is well known that people with low mobility or bed-bound (even if just temporary) are more likely to get constipated.

Toileting routines. Do not ignore the feeling of needing the toilet. Some people suppress this feeling if they are busy. It may result in a backlog of stools which is difficult to pass later.

As a rule, it is best to try going to the toilet first thing in the morning or about 30 minutes after a meal. This is because the movement of stools through the lower bowel is greatest in the mornings and after meals.

How you sit on the toilet is also important. A small footstool under your feet is a will help the passage of stools.

Relax, lean forward and rest your elbows on your thighs. You should not strain and hold your breath to pass stools.



## Health and Safety Information for New Employees.

The West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust welcomes you and hopes you enjoy your employment here. All workers have a right to work in places where risks to their health and safety are properly controlled. Health and safety is about stopping you getting hurt at work or ill through work.

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 the Trust has duties to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees, and other persons not in the Trusts employment (visitors, patients and contractors) who could be affected by its activities.

To ensure this happens the Trust must:

- 1) provide and maintain plant and systems of work that are, safe and without risks to health
- 2) have in place arrangements for ensuring, safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances
- 3) provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, the health and safety at work of all employees and others present on site
- 4) ensure as regards any place of work under the employer's control, the maintenance of it in a condition that is safe and without risks to health and the provision and maintenance of means of access to and egress from it that are safe and without such risks
- 5) provide and maintain a working environment that is, safe, without risks to health, and adequate as regards facilities and welfare arrangements for their welfare at work

To enable the Trust to ensure it complies with these requirements there are a number of policies and procedures in place which can be found on the intranet.

The Trust has a legal duty to have in place a Health, Safety and Welfare Policy.

The Trusts Health, Safety and Welfare Policy (PP018), gives detailed information on the Trusts and employees responsibilities towards health and safety and it is therefore paramount that every employee has read, understood and abides by the policy contents.

The following is an extract from the policy that details employee responsibilities, these are not exhaustive and other responsibilities may be applicable within specific areas/departments.

### **3.5 Employees Responsibilities**

It shall be the duty of every employee, while at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions. Employees are required to co-operate with the employer on health and safety matters. Where an employee feels a health and safety measure needs to be improved they should raise this with their line manager initially.

It will be the responsibility of all employees to bring to the employer's attention any defective equipment or potential hazard they have identified, which might present a serious and imminent danger to health and safety of themselves and others within the Trust.

Every employee who has been made aware of the hazards related to their tasks **shall use** any machinery, workplace equipment, dangerous substances, transport equipment, clinical safety devices and personal protective equipment provided to them by the Trust, in accordance with the information, instruction and training provided, to ensure the effectiveness of control measures.

Employees must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare in pursuance of any of the relevant statutory provisions.

All employees should receive a local induction into the area or department they will work in. This should cover relevant health and safety information including:

- 1) Any significant risks and current control measures identified on risk assessments carried out for the area or on specific tasks.
- 2) Fire and emergency procedures including assembly points and identification of safe emergency routes,  
**Note:** there is a general information leaflet on fire that needs to be read and understood within the welcome pack.
- 3) First aid, some departments have first aid qualified persons and these should be identified to you.  
**Note:** In the event first aid is required, and there are no first aiders in your department, nursing staff or the hospital's emergency department are available.
- 4) Welfare facilities such as toilets, wash and shower areas and location of staff rest areas such as the time out café should also be advised.
- 5) Identification of the departments Health and Safety Link Person, COSHH Link Person and Union Health and Safety Representative.

If you are a permanent employee you will receive a full days induction into the Trust, this will include information on all departments within the hospital including a brief overview on hospital health and safety procedures.

Any members of staff who has queries or concerns in regard to health and safety must discuss these with their line manager as soon as possible. If however the issue(s) is not resolved any member of staff can seek advice and information from the Health, Safety and Risk Manager or the Risk Officer located in the Risk Office which can be found near to the Matron's Office. The contact number for the Risk Office is Ext.3944 or 3909.

If you witness or are involved in an incident or accident this must be reported to your line manager as soon as possible. An incident form will then be completed on Datix either by you or your line manager. For further advice on the Datix Risk management System please contact Lorraine Gosling the Datix administrator on Ext. 3770

There are numerous training opportunities within the hospital and health and safety related ones are no exception.

Some training will be mandatory depending on the department/area being you are working in. Details of the mandatory training applicable to the department/area along with update frequency can be found on the intranet.

**Note:** The line manager and employee must ensure all mandatory and any other required training is up to date.  
If you have any questions or requests for health and safety training please contact the Health, safety and Risk Manager on Ext. 3944

### **Finally**

The Trust would like to ensure you leave work in the same, if not, better condition than you arrived.

So please ensure work is carried out in the safest way possible. Always follow advice, guidance and signage that is given or displayed. Always report any health and safety issues as soon as possible to your line manager.

We all have a duty to keep ourselves safe, by co-operating with safety measures and not putting ourselves or others in danger. This is just common sense- something we all use every day. It is important that we are not put at risk by other people's actions, but if we ignore our own responsibilities, real risks can get missed. Playing the blame game doesn't keep people safe- better to rely on common sense and co-operation.