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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/constipation.html>

Constipation

Constipation means having fewer than three bowel movements [<https://medlineplus.gov/bowelmovement.html>] a week. The stool (poop) can be hard and dry. Sometimes it is painful to pass. At one time or another, almost everyone gets constipated. In most cases, it lasts a short time and is not serious.


There are many things you can do to prevent constipation. They include:

- Eating more fruits, vegetables and grains, which are high in fiber [<https://medlineplus.gov/dietaryfiber.html>]
- Drinking plenty of water and other liquids
- Getting enough exercise
- Taking time to have a bowel movement when you need to
- Using laxatives only if your health care provider says you should
- Asking your provider if medicines you take may cause constipation

It's not important that you have a bowel movement every day. If your bowel habits change, however, check with your provider.

NIH: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases




Start Here

- Constipation [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation/symptoms-causes/syc-20354253?p=1>]
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- Definition and Facts for Constipation [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation/definition-facts>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Symptoms

- Symptoms and Causes of Constipation [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation/symptoms-causes>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Colonoscopy: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/colonoscopy.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/colonoscopy.html>]
- Diagnosis of Constipation [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation/diagnosis>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
- Lower GI Series (Barium Enema) [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diagnostic-tests/lower-gi-series>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/pruebas-diagnosticas/transito-gastrointestinal-inferior>]
- Lower GI X-Ray (Barium Enema) [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/lowergi>]
(American College of Radiology; Radiological Society of North America)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.radiologyinfo.org/es/info/lowergi>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Eating, Diet, and Nutrition for Constipation [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation/eating-diet-nutrition>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)
- Flaxseed and Flaxseed Oil [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/flaxseed-and-flaxseed-oil>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Nonprescription Laxatives for Constipation: Use with Caution [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation/in-depth/laxatives/ART-20045906?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/constipation/in-depth/laxatives/art-20045906?p=1>]
- Treatment for Constipation [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation/treatment>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)


Related Issues

- Dyssynergic Defecation: About a Common Cause of Chronic Constipation [<https://iffgd.org/gi-disorders/lower-gi-disorders/dyssynergic-defecation/>] (International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)
- How to Get More Fiber in Your Diet [<https://familydoctor.org/fiber-how-to-increase-the-amount-in-your-diet/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/fibra-como-aumentar-la-cantidad-de-fibra-en-su-dieta/?adfree=true>]
- Rectal Prolapse [<https://fascrs.org/patients/diseases-and-conditions/a-z/rectal-prolapse-expanded-version>] (American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons)
- Solitary Rectal Ulcer Syndrome [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/rectal-ulcer/symptoms-causes/syc-20377749?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/rectal-ulcer/symptoms-causes/syc-20377749?p=1>]

Health Check Tools

- Elimination Problems or Constipation [<https://familydoctor.org/symptom/elimination-problems/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/sintoma/problemas-de-eliminacion/?adfree=true>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Constipation [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Constipation%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles


References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Management of Constipation in Eating Disorders-A Scoping Review. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40692289>]
- Article: Unraveling the frequency of intestinal constipation in woman with urinary incontinence:... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40673022>]
- Article: Combined association of chewing capacity and depression with constipation: a cross-sectional... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40660119>]
- Constipation -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Constipation%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons [<https://fascrs.org/>]

• Find a Gastroenterologist (GI Doctor) [<https://gi.org/patients/find-a-gastroenterologist/>] (American College of Gastroenterology)

• National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

Children

• Constipation (For Kids) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/constipation.html>] (Nemours Foundation)


Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/constipation.html>]

• Constipation and Fecal Soiling [https://gikids.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Constipation_and_Fecal_Soiling.pdf]

(North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition) - **PDF**

• Definition and Facts for Constipation in Children [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation-children/definition-facts>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/estreñimiento-ninos/definicion-informacion>]

• Diagnosis of Constipation in Children [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation-children/diagnosis>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/estreñimiento-ninos/diagnostico>]


• Eating, Diet, and Nutrition for Constipation in Children [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation-children/eating-diet-nutrition>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/estreñimiento-ninos/alimentacion-dieta-nutricion>]

• How Can I Tell If My Baby is Constipated? [<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/Infant-Constipation.aspx>] (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.healthychildren.org/Spanish/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Paginas/Infant-Constipation.aspx>]

• Symptoms and Causes of Constipation in Children [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation-children/symptoms-causes>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

• Treatment for Constipation in Children [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/constipation-children/treatment>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/estreñimiento-ninos/tratamiento>]

Teenagers

• Constipation [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/constipation.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/constipation.html>]

Women

• Pregnancy Constipation: Are Stool Softeners Safe? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/expert-answers/pregnancy-constipation/faq-20058550?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/expert-answers/pregnancy-constipation/faq-20058550?p=1>]

Older Adults

• Concerned About Constipation? [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/constipation/concerned-about-constipation>]

 (National Institute on Aging)

• Nutrition Needs for Older Adults: Fiber [https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/nutrition/Nutrition-Needs_Fiber_FINAL-2.19-FINAL_508.pdf] (Administration for Community Living) - **PDF**

Patient Handouts

• Constipation - self-care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000120.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000120.htm>]

• Constipation in infants and children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003125.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003125.htm>]

- Fecal impaction [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000230.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000230.htm>]
- Tenesmus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003131.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003131.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Bowel retraining [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003971.htm>]

Constipation - self-care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000120.htm>]

Constipation - what to ask your doctor [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000214.htm>]

Constipation in infants and children [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003125.htm>]

Fecal impaction [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000230.htm>]

Tenesmus [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003131.htm>]

Total abdominal colectomy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007379.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Dietary Fiber [<https://medlineplus.gov/dietaryfiber.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Constipation* is the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/constipation.html>] on *Constipation*

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