

Constipation

Linda Galarneau, RN, GNC(C), NCA
613-548-7222, ext. 2412

Your guide to
Managing Constipation

Providence Care
St. Mary's of the Lake Hospital
Specialized Geriatrics
340 Union Street
Kingston, ON K7L 5A2



Providence Care will lead the way in compassion and discovery.

Providence
Care

Providence
Care

ABOUT CONSTIPATION

Q. WHAT IS IT?

A. Constipation is when your stools are:

- ◆ Hard
- ◆ Dry
- ◆ Small
- ◆ Hard to pass

Also:

- ◆ There may be a decrease in your normal number of bowel movements
- ◆ Your abdomen may feel dull, distended and uncomfortable, and you may pass gas
- ◆ Your rectum may feel full or you may feel pressure
- ◆ You may feel nauseated, vomit or not feel like eating anything
- ◆ You may have a headache or feel tired

Q. WHAT CAUSES IT?

A. *Constipation is common as we get older.*

Some common causes of constipation are:

- ◆ Decreased activity
- ◆ Lack of dietary fibre
- ◆ Poor fluid intake
- ◆ Stress
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Some medications
- ◆ Some illnesses

MANAGING CONSTIPATION

Q. IS IT SERIOUS?

A. Generally no, constipation is not serious! However, a change in your usual bowel pattern may be an indication of a more serious problem. Call your doctor if constipation symptoms last longer than **seven** days, or if you notice blood, mucous, or discoloured stools. *Talk to your doctor about constipation first before taking any remedies or changing any of your present medications!*

Q. HOW DO YOU TREAT CONSTIPATION?

A. Drink 6-8 cups of fluid a day.

Increase the fibre in your diet every day by eating:

- ◆ Fresh fruit
- ◆ Salads
- ◆ Whole grain cereals such as bran
- ◆ Beans and lentils
- ◆ Go for a walk every day



Q. WHAT MEDICATIONS SHOULD I TAKE FOR CONSTIPATION?

A. Ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medications. There are a variety that can:

- ◆ Soften the stool
- ◆ Make your stools bulkier, softer and easier to pass
- ◆ Evacuate your bowels