

7 Lifestyle Tips to Relieve Constipation

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Not being able to make a bowel movement is uncomfortable, painful and even dangerous if there is too much time between movements. A quarter of the population experience constipation which is sometimes defined as having less than 3 bowel movements per week. Constipation tends to get worse as we get older. Severe constipation is a serious matter and requires medical attention. Whether constipation is severe or mild, here are some things you can do to help:

- 1) Stay away from foods that can cause constipation** – These can include cheese (and other dairy foods), alcohol, processed and fried foods, unripe bananas, red meat, and too much coffee (generally > 2-3 cups/day). Chocolate can cause constipation for people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome, but for most people it appears to be fine.
- 2) Move** – A recent study of inactive, constipated, middle aged adults who started walking briskly for 30 minutes a day had a significant decrease in constipation. “Move for a movement.”
- 3) Hydrate yourself** – You don’t have to drink water like crazy, but you need to be hydrated in order to reduce constipation. The old standby of 8, 8-ounce glasses of water a day will ensure you are hydrated. Adding freshly squeezed lemon juice to your water not only will make for a nice flavor, it may actually help reduce constipation as well.

- 4) **Eat plenty of fiber** – Eating a high fiber diet is one of the best remedies for constipation. You want to have both soluble fiber (nuts, seeds, beans, some fruits and vegetables) and insoluble fiber (vegetables and whole grains). For improved digestion and decreased constipation eat fiber at every meal. The USDA Fiber Guidelines for Americans are 25 grams of fiber for women and 38 grams for men. The average actual intake for most Americans is 15 grams per day.
- 5) **Drink a small amount of coffee** – One to two cups of coffee per day can help relieve constipation, but more can make it worse. Enjoy some coffee, but don't overdo it!
- 6) **Increase your consumption of olives and olive oil** – Olive Oil has been shown to significantly help relieve constipation. The people of the Mediterranean eat a lot of olive oil, sometimes as high as 30% of their daily calories. Lubricating the system can be very helpful to get the bowels moving. Olives deliver double the pleasure as you get both the oil and the fiber from the olive fruit.
- 7) **Eat yogurt** – While most dairy foods can cause constipation, yogurt has been shown to help reduce it. The probiotics in yogurt may be what help with constipation. If you are lactose intolerant and don't do well with yogurt, then don't eat it.

Here is a list of some of the best high fiber foods from the website www.eatthis.com.

