

Constipation

Constipation is defined as when a person passes fewer than 3 bowel movements per week. This is a common non-motor symptom of Parkinson's Disease that affects approximately 65% of all people with PD.

Causes of Constipation

- Parkinson's affect on the automatic nervous system can directly impact the smooth muscles of the gut and bowels. This direct impact on the gut and bowels translates to a slowness of the muscles in the digestive tract which causes them to not move bowel movements through the tract at a typical speed. When digestive tract movement slows in people with Parkinson's, constipation can occur.
- Medications for Parkinson's can cause constipation
- Not drinking enough water
- Not getting enough fiber in a day
- Lack of exercise
- Weakness in the pelvic floor muscles

Tips for Avoiding Constipation

- Eat a well balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes for natural sources of fiber.
- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise daily
- Drink warm liquids, especially in the morning
- Discuss use of stool softeners and laxatives with your doctor

What to Expect as a Care Partner

- Your loved one may feel nauseous and have a limited appetite when constipated
 - When trying to pass a bowel movement while constipated, your loved one may become frustrated and may get sick to their stomach
 - Your loved one may experience bloating and discomfort
 - It is important to keep track of how many days your loved one goes between passing a bowel movement. If constipation is left untreated or unresolved, it may lead to hemorrhoids or fecal impaction which can affect overall health in the long run.
- Always communicate with your loved ones care team about their struggles with constipation. As a general rule, your loved one should have a bowel movement every 3-4 days. After 3-4 days it may be time to seek medical intervention.