

# Remedies for relieving constipation



Constipation is extremely common and occurs for many different reasons. Stress, lack of exercise, certain medications and a diet that's lacking fibre or fluids can all contribute. Other underlying factors may be due to imbalances in the body, such as an underactive thyroid, changes in oestrogen levels, poor liver function and imbalances of the nervous system. Although as a symptom it needs to be supported through a holistic plan that addresses the underlying causes, there are some remedies that can be used to aid in more immediate relief.

Before you try any of the remedies below ensure you are drinking enough water - around 1.5 to 2 litres a day. Water is one of nature's most effective laxatives, and many people do not drink enough on a regular basis. Having warm water with a slice of lemon in first thing in the morning, is also helpful.



## Herbal teas

A number of herbal teas are known to have a laxative effect. Try drinking 3-4 cups a day. Go for ginger, lemon, peppermint, fennel, tulsi and clove. Ideally make your own, as these will be much stronger than shop bought options. Make sure the water is just below boiling.

**Lemon and ginger:** Slice up 1 inch of ginger root and add to hot water with a good squeeze of lemon. This is especially good for first thing in the morning and then before going to bed.

**Fresh mint tea:** Buy a fresh mint plant and if you have a balcony or garden, plant it in a larger pot, as it will grow like wildfire. Take a small handful of leaves and add to hot water. Leave to infuse for a few minutes before drinking.

**Highly spiced tea:** Cloves are recognized all over the world for their medicinal and culinary qualities. They are the "flower buds" from evergreen rain-forest trees. Try this spice tea first thing in the morning and then throughout the day if necessary: Take ½ tsp whole cloves, ¼ tsp cinnamon, ¼ tsp nutmeg- simmer in a pan for 3-5 minutes and drink whilst still warm.

## Flaxseed Infusion

Flaxseeds are fantastic in all their forms, but can be particularly helpful for relieving constipation. There are two methods of making the infusion.

Boil 150-200ml of water with 2 tablespoons whole flax seeds for 2-3 minutes. Let sit another 3-4 minutes and then strain while still hot and drink. Or just drink the solution with the seeds as they are excellent for your gut health as well. Do this three times a day, with the final one being just before bed.

Alternatively place 2 tablespoons whole flaxseeds in 150-200ml hot water and leave overnight. In the morning you can either drink with or without the seeds. You can also do this throughout the day, up to three times. If using fresh lemon tea then drink the flax infusion at a different time, as lemon breaks down the gelatinous substances released from the flax.

You can also add whole or ground flaxseeds to meals throughout the day. They contain plenty of fibre and can help get things moving.

### **Good old-fashioned prunes and figs**

Prune juice is an old and effective remedy for constipation. You should start with a 250ml serving and allow a half hour for it to take effect. If it doesn't work, drink more. Ideally, try to find an unfiltered juice with no added sugar. Unfiltered juice has more of the prune's fibre. However, it is not easy to find unsweetened and unfiltered prune juice in supermarkets and even whole food shops. You can look online, or go for the most natural looking one you can find. If you don't have prune juice, you can also eat prunes. Whole prunes will definitely have all of the fibre, but some find that juice works faster. Regardless of its form, this remedy works better on an empty stomach. For added laxative effect you can add 1 tablespoon of blackstrap molasses to your evening prune juice.

Dried figs are high in fibre and work similarly to prune juice. Go for organic figs with no added sugar, as excessive amounts of sugar can be a contributing factor to imbalances in the gut in the first place. Eat 4 or 5 dried figs and then drink a large glass of water. You can repeat this process up to three times a day if needed.

These fruit and vegetables are natural laxatives: rhubarb, apples, berries, melon, kale, spinach, watercress, lettuce, rocket and chard.

### **Juicing**

If you have a juicer at home then this is an excellent way to get things going in the morning. Try the following juice: 1 large carrot, ½ apple, 2 sticks of celery, ½ beetroot, ½ lemon or lime, 1-2 inches of ginger root.

### **Psyllium husks**

Psyllium husks are a source of soluble fibre and if used on a regular basis may help. You can buy the husks in all health food shops, including Holland and Barrett. It's essential you stick to the dose on the packet, and make sure you drink **plenty** of water with the husks. This is essential.

**Sources and further information:** [www.healing.answers.com](http://www.healing.answers.com), [www.nutrition-and-you.com/cloves](http://www.nutrition-and-you.com/cloves)

