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For Naturopathic Medicine & Functional Nutrition

Constipation

Constipation is a common digestive issue and is typically defined as having fewer than three bowel movements per week. However, it can also be characterized by having dry, hard, and difficult-to-pass stools, straining during bowel movements, and feeling like you're not completely emptying your bowels. Common causes of constipation include a low-fiber diet, dehydration, lack of physical activity, certain medications, and some medical conditions.

How to Avoid Constipation

Eat a High-Fiber Diet: Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes can help you maintain regular bowel movements. Aim for at least 25-30 grams of fiber per day. Here are some excellent food sources of fiber:









Split peas (1 cup cooked) - 16.3 grams of fiber
Lentils (1 cup cooked) - 15.6 grams of fiber
Black beans (1 cup cooked) - 15 grams of fiber
Lima beans (1 cup cooked) - 13.2 grams of fiber
Artichokes (1 medium) - 10.3 grams of fiber
Peas (1 cup cooked) - 8.8 grams of fiber
Raspberries (1 cup) - 8 grams of fiber
Broccoli (1 cup cooked) - 5.2 grams of fiber
Oatmeal (1 cup cooked) - 4 grams of fiber
Apples (1 medium) - 4 grams of fiber
Flaxseeds (2 tablespoons) - 3.8 grams of fiber
Chia seeds (2 tablespoons) - 9.7 grams of fiber

Stay Hydrated: Drink plenty of fluids, especially water, to help soften your stool and make it easier to pass. The general recommendation for water intake is to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses but needs can vary based on age, gender, climate, and activity level.

Hydrating foods and beverages include watermelon, cucumbers, celery, herbal teas, unsweetened beverages.

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How to Treat Constipation

Increase Fiber Intake: If you're constipated, gradually increasing your fiber intake can help soften your stool and make it easier to pass. You can do this by eating more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains or taking a fiber supplement.

Drink More Water: Drinking plenty of fluids, especially water, can help soften your stool and make it easier to pass.

Try Laxatives: Over-the-counter laxatives can help relieve constipation. However, it's important to use them sparingly and under the guidance of a healthcare provider.

Exercise: Regular exercise can help stimulate bowel movements and relieve constipation.

Consider Probiotics: Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that live in your gut and can help improve digestive health. Eating probiotic-rich foods or taking a probiotic supplement may help relieve constipation.

Special Note About Kiwifruit

Several studies suggest that kiwifruit consumption can improve bowel function and may reduce the risk of constipation. The high fiber and vitamin C content of kiwifruit, as well as its natural enzymes, have been suggested as potential mechanisms behind this effect.



A single kiwi fruit contains around 2.3 grams of fiber, which is about 10% of the daily recommended intake for adults. The fiber in kiwis is both soluble and insoluble, which means it can help to soften stool and promote the movement of waste through the digestive tract.