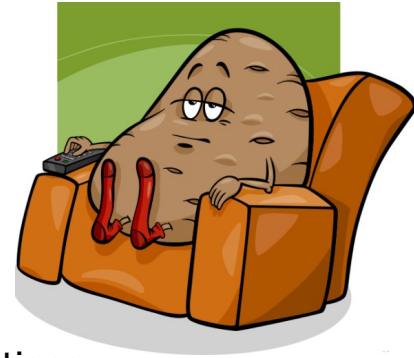


Older adults are at a higher risk of becoming constipated than younger adults. As we get older, the digestive system slows down, and there are many other factors that can contribute to this problem.

Constipation is caused by:

- Poor diet
- Lack of adequate fluids
- Lack of exercise
- Stress and/or depression
- Overuse of laxatives
- Repeated refraining
- Use of certain drugs to treat other medical conditions



How to combat constipation:

• **Get active**

If you don't move, nothing else does! Exercise keeps you regular, and getting the recommended 150 minutes/week of moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activity prevents many age-related health problems and decreases the risk for colon cancer.

• **Drink plenty of fluids**

As we age, our sense of thirst becomes less precise. That's why we shouldn't rely on waiting until we're thirsty to have a drink. A better indicator is the color of your urine, if it's dark, increase your fluids, urine should be a light straw color. Caffeine (coffee & tea) does not hydrate you. These drinks are actually diuretics, causing you to urinate more, and become dehydrated.

• **Eat more fiber**

Try to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as both soluble and insoluble fiber. More on this later!

• **Check your meds**

Talk with your doctor to see if your medications could be causing any digestive symptoms.

• **Manage your weight**

This helps prevent many age-related health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Avoiding health problems can reduce the number of medications you need to take, which means less worry about digestive side effects.

• **Don't hold it**

Once in a while won't harm you, but repeatedly waiting too long to go causes your stool to become drier, making it harder to pass.

Soluble Fiber

- Soft and sticky
- Absorbs water to form a gel-like substance inside the digestive system
- Helps soften stool
- Lowers cholesterol & controls blood sugar

Sources: oatmeal, beans, peas, oats, barley, fruits, and avocados



Insoluble Fiber

- Isn't broken down by the gut
 - Adds bulk to waste, which helps keep you regular
- Sources:* tough matter found in whole grains; nuts; and in the stalks, skins, and seeds of fruits & veggies

A healthy diet for seniors should include 21-30 grams of fiber per day

Foods to eat:

- Fruits such as: prunes, pineapple, and fruits with edible skins like pears, apples, and berries
- Vegetables such as: broccoli, carrots, beans, and lentils
- Whole grains & oatmeal: contains healthy fiber, plus helps you feel full!
- Yogurt: contains healthy gut bacteria which help keep things moving
- Nuts and seeds: especially flaxseed

Remember to increase your fiber intake *slowly* to avoid excessive gas, bloating, or cramping. Make sure if you increase your fiber intake, you **increase your water intake!** Fiber without water can increase likelihood of constipation.

Foods to avoid:

- White bread, pasta, and rice: switch to whole grain for fiber
- Convenience/Fried foods: full of bad fats which slow digestion, and salt which causes dehydration
- Excess coffee or black tea: these are diuretics which cause you to urinate more instead of absorbing that water to help move stool along
- Red meat (in excess): contains no fiber and it is high in iron; too much iron in the diet can make stools hard
- Under-ripe bananas: contain high amounts of starch and pectin, which can be constipating



For more information and resources for older adults, contact Forever...in motion at (306)844-4080

References

- Crowch, M. (2016). *Causes of Constipation*. Retrieved July 14, 2017, from Constipation Experts: <http://www.constipationexperts.co.uk/causes-of-constipation.html>
- Dietitians of Canada. (2013, February 06). *Planning Meals: Fibre Facts*. Retrieved July 14, 2017, from Dietitians of Canada: <https://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Seniors/Planning-Meals--Fibre-Facts.aspx>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2017, April 28). *Concerned About Constipation?* Retrieved July 14, 2017, from National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/concerned-about-constipation>