



Constipation - How You Can Relieve It

Constipation is a problem of Western cultures and refers to the inability to empty the bowels regularly. The bowels should be emptied between one and three times a day. Less than this is classed as constipation. It is estimated that about 10% of the population in Western communities suffer from this problem. In the developing countries of the world it is virtually unknown.

Annoying Health Problems

Constipation is not just an annoying or embarrassing problem. If it is not dealt with effectively it may lead to chronic health problems such as haemorrhoids, diverticular disease and toxic overload from the faeces which can cause problems such as headaches, fatigue and general feelings of ill health.

Dietary Fibre

Dietary fibre plays a major role in bowel habits. Inadequate amounts of dietary fibre are the primary cause of constipation. Increasing the amount of plain water may also help improve bowel habits.

Psyllium

Psyllium is a very effective natural laxative which contains a large amount of mucilage - a form of fibre. It therefore helps to increase the bulk of the faeces, which means that the bowel is able to push the faeces along and eliminate it more easily.

Apple Pectin

Apple pectin supplies another good source of fibre. It has the ability to form a gel which can bind water and toxins together, thus solidifying watery stools.

Charcoal

Charcoal is also used frequently to help cleanse the bowel and to absorb toxins, and it may also be helpful to include in a regime to relieve constipation.

Papaya Extract

Papaya extract contains a unique enzyme called papain which is an important protein-digesting enzyme which stimulates digestion and bowel movements. It is frequently used in the treatment of IBS type symptoms such as constipation, diarrhoea, bloating, cramps, wind and indigestion.

Fresh Fruit & Vegetables

Dietary fibre absorbs water which increases the weight and the bulk of the stool and makes it softer. This helps the bowel eliminate the stool more rapidly. Fibre also encourages the growth of beneficial bacteria in the colon which is essential in maintaining the health of the colon. Eating lots more fresh fruit and vegetables can increase the amount of fibre in the diet.

Food Sensitivities

Food sensitivities may be linked to problems with constipation and therefore it is advisable to eliminate these from the diet. A food sensitivity test can be carried out by a laboratory like Healthibeing, which will identify offending food. Even with nutritional intervention people often need supplements to help improve their bowel habits.



Beneficial Bacteria

There are two main types of beneficial bacteria found in the colon – lactobacillus acidophilus and bifido bacterium. It is essential for colon health that the levels of these bacteria are maintained. Beneficial bacteria have multiple roles within the gastrointestinal tract. They break down undigested fibre, produce certain vitamins, help to eliminate toxins. They also control the levels of yeasts, like candida, so they don't become a problem to health. In order to maintain the levels of beneficial bacteria many people take a daily supplement containing these bacteria. These supplements are known as probiotics. By taking these probiotic supplements on a daily basis the levels of beneficial bacteria are maintained and the problem of constipation may be eliminated.

Regular Exercise

Exercise has shown to help stimulate healthy bowel function. Try taking the stairs instead of the lift and try to embark on a regular exercise regime.

Fight Off Infections

Talk to your health care professional about the supplements you should take to help maintain regular bowel habits. A good supplement should contain psyllium, prune powder, guar gum and oat bran as well as some probiotics and herbs such as Echinacea which help to fight off infections.