

# Self care fact sheet – Infrequent Constipation



Constipation is a very common problem and affects people of all ages, although it occurs more frequently as we get older. It occurs when your bowel movements become less frequent than is usual for you. Your local pharmacist who can advise and recommend over the counter treatments for you.

## What can you do to prevent constipation?

- Increase the amount of exercise you do. Regular activity helps to move stool through the bowel and strengthens your abdominal (stomach) muscles.
- Consider avoiding, if it is appropriate to do so, any medicines that may constipate such as opioids e.g. codeine, iron tablets.
- Improve your toilet routine. Keep to a regular time and give yourself plenty of time. Do not delay. Try resting your feet on a low stool whilst on the toilet. If possible, raise your knees above your hips
- Increase your daily fluid intake to about two litres. Increase the amount of clear fluids you drink. Include fruit juices and vegetable soup for variety and fibre. Avoid alcohol.
- Eat more foods that are high in fibre, such as fruit, vegetables and wholemeal bread, pasta and rice. Try to have at least five servings of fruit and vegetables daily. Experts recommend an intake of 18g of fibre daily.
- For further information see this website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation/>

## When shall I see a GP?

If you notice any persistent change in your bowel habit, or any of the following:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• needing to go to the toilet more often</li><li>• having looser stool</li><li>• bleeding from your bottom or stomach pain</li><li>• change prescribed medication causing constipation</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• feel bloated and it lasts a long time</li><li>• unexpectedly lost weight</li><li>• feel very tired all the time</li><li>• regularly constipated lasting a long time</li></ul> |
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