

# Constipation



“I had a difficult time going to the bathroom. Eating prunes and other high-fiber foods, such as fruits and vegetables, helped me. I also drank lots of water.”

## What is constipation?

Are you having bowel movements that come less often than normal for you, are painful, or are hard to pass? This is called constipation.

**Let your doctor or nurse know if you have not had a bowel movement in 2 days.**

## Take these steps:

### Eat high-fiber foods such as:

- Whole-grain breads and cereals
- Fruits and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds

**Turn this sheet over to learn what other foods may help.**

### Drink lots of liquids.


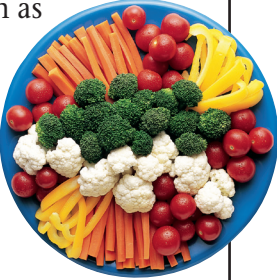

- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of liquid every day. Water is a good choice. So are fruit and vegetable juices, such as prune juice.
- Warm liquids such as coffee or tea may help.

### Try to be active every day.

- Walk or ride an exercise bike for 15 to 30 minutes a day.
- Talk with your doctor to learn about other exercises that can help you.



## These foods may help if you are constipated:

Breads and grains	Fruits and vegetables	Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bran muffins</li> <li>• Bran or whole-grain cereals</li> <li>• Brown or wild rice</li> <li>• Cooked, dried peas and beans (such as pinto, black, red, or kidney)</li> <li>• Whole-wheat bread</li> <li>• Whole-wheat pasta and tortillas</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried fruit, such as apricots, dates, prunes, and raisins</li> <li>• Fresh fruit, such as apples, blueberries, and grapes</li> <li>• Raw or cooked vegetables, such as broccoli, corn, green beans, peas, and spinach</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granola</li> <li>• Nuts</li> <li>• Popcorn</li> <li>• Seeds, such as sunflower</li> </ul> 
<p><b>Ask your doctor or nurse which foods are best for you.</b></p>		

### Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. Should I keep track of when I have a bowel movement, what I eat, and how often I exercise?
3. How much liquid should I drink each day?
4. What medicines are okay for me to take?
5. What exercises can help me?
6. Could you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about foods that might help me?



### How can we help?

#### National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

Online Chat: [www.cancer.gov/livehelp](http://www.cancer.gov/livehelp)

**NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:**

[www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects](http://www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects)

