



CONSTIPATION GUIDELINES

Constipation is defined as a significant decrease in the passage of stools.

There are many factors leading to constipation, such as

- a decrease in water intake,
- a decrease in dietary fiber intake,
- a decrease in exercise and
- taking medications (such as pain medications and iron supplements).

If you are constipated, you may feel bloated, have cramps and not eat well enough to maintain your weight (a primary goal of cancer therapy).

General Guidelines

- A diet high in fiber promotes regular elimination, and it increases and softens the stools. The best way to increase fiber in your diet is through eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains. The goal is to consume 25 to 35 grams of dietary fiber a day.
- Fluid intake should be a minimum of 8 to 10 glasses a day. Try warm prune juice or warm nectar at bedtime and/or in the morning.
- Light to moderate exercise, such as walking, will help stimulate the passage of stools.
- Try to stick to a consistent and daily elimination schedule.
- Bran may be introduced into the diet by adding it to cereals, casseroles, applesauce, etc.
- You may want to try natural stool softeners, such as Metamucil®, daily.
- High-fiber foods should be introduced slowly into your diet. At first you may feel cramping and bloating, but these symptoms will subside once your body adapts to the high fiber.

Please refer to High Fiber Diet chart on reverse side.

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High Fiber Diet

Food Groups	High Fiber Foods (Maximize)	Lower Fiber Foods (Minimize)
Beverages (including prune juice and nectar)	8 to 10 cups of fluid each day	
Breads, Cereals and Grains (4 or more servings)	Whole grain products, such as breads, rolls, bagels, muffins, crackers, rice, pasta, bran cereals, granola and oatmeal	Processed, white and refined bread and grains, such as Italian bread, French bread and white rice
Fruit (Minimum 2 servings)	Fresh fruits with skin and seeds, dried fruits, prune juice, nectars, fruit juice with pulp	All fruit juices without the pulp and canned fruits
Vegetables (Minimum 2 servings)	Raw vegetables, corn, potato with skin and cooked vegetables with skins or stalks	Vegetable juices and canned vegetables
Animal and Dairy Products, and Protein Alternatives	Cooked, dried beans, peas and lentils, and chunky peanut butter	Blended and pureed meats

There are medications that your physician may prescribe or recommend for you to use. Please make sure that you check with your physician before starting any over-the-counter medications or home remedies.

For More Information

Ask for the inpatient or outpatient dietitian.