



Date: _____

Client's Name: _____

Registered Dietitian's Name: _____

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Constipation

Constipation is a very common problem among cancer patients. It can result from: the cancer therapies, medications, a diet low in fiber, low fluid intake or a lack of physical activity.

If you are having less bowel movements than usual and/or your stools are harder to pass, certain nutrition interventions may help manage the side effect of constipation.

A diet high in fiber may aid with constipation relief. Try adding the following foods to your diet:

- *Whole* wheat/grain pasta, cereals, breads, crackers & muffins
- Bran cereals (e.g., All Bran Buds®, Bran Flakes®, All Bran®, Red River® cereal)
- Cornmeal, barley, brown & wild rice
- Nuts (eg. almonds, walnuts, trail mix)
- Seeds (whole flax seeds, sesame, sunflower)
- Granola or popcorn
- Dried fruits (e.g., dates, figs, prunes, raisins, apricots)
- Peas, beans and lentils (kidney, black-eyed, navy, lima, chickpeas, split peas)
- Fresh fruit (e.g., berries, oranges, nectarines, plums, grapes, apples & pears with skins)
- Fresh vegetables (e.g. peas, spinach, potatoes with skins, broccoli, corn, brussel sprouts, & other greens)

- Hot or cold prune juice or nectar

Helpful Hints:

When eating:

- The ability to handle fiber varies from person to person. Increase your fiber intake *slowly* and spread it evenly throughout the day in order to reduce possible gas and bloating.
- Include *skins* of fruits and vegetables in your diet, as they are excellent sources of dietary fibre, as well as, vitamins, minerals.
- Use *whole grain* flour rather than refined white flour in baking.
- Add 2 tbsp. of natural bran to meatloaves, casserole dishes, baked goods, salads, or cereals. The quantity of liquid in the recipe may also need to be increased.
- Add nuts, seeds, or dried fruits to salads, yogurt, fruit cups, baked goods and casserole dishes.
- You should eat whatever has helped you move your bowels in the past.

When drinking:

- Hot beverages may help to stimulate bowel activity. Try hot prune juice with your breakfast.
- When increasing your fibre intake it is very important to increase your fluid intake as well. Increase fluid intake of non-caffeinated beverages to *at least* eight 8-oz. (250mL) cups daily to aid in stool softening. Further increase may be required on an individual basis up to 10-12 cups or more. (e.g., water, milk, juice, soup, ginger ale, decaffeinated coffee and tea).
- Try caffeine-containing beverages to a maximum intake of 3 cups/d as caffeine often stimulates bowel movement. (eg. coffee, green or black tea, hot chocolate)

Try...

- If possible, try to include regular daily physical activity (e.g., walking, cycling, golfing, and skating).
- Flaxseed (linseed) can ease constipation and soften stool. Try 1 teaspoon ground flaxseed daily with a glass of water. If tolerated, it can be used in moderation up to 1-2 tbsp/day. You can incorporate flax into your diet by adding to your cereal, yogurt, salads, baked goods...etc.

If the above nutrition suggestions do not help relieve symptoms, talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian.