



## Nutritional Remedies for Constipation

Ideally, a healthy person has one to three well-formed bowel movements daily. If you find that your bowels are moving more slowly than you would like, try one of the following nutritional remedies:

- *Drink more water.* Water is nature's stool softener, and staying hydrated will promote bowel health. Be especially mindful of your water intake during cold weather – the air is so dry that your body loses water faster than in warm weather. This is especially dangerous because people tend to not want to drink water when they feel cold.
- *Eat fiber-rich foods.* Fiber adds bulk to stool and it feeds the healthy bacteria in the colon. The best sources of fiber for most people are fruits and vegetables. Whole grains also contain fiber, but if you are having colon problems it is best to stick to low-allergy, gluten-free grains such as amaranth, quinoa, millet, and oats instead of wheat.
- *Take Vitamin C.* Vitamin C helps to draw water into the colon, which causes a bowel movement. Start with 500 mg of vitamin C and over the course of a few days, gradually increase your dosage in increments of 500 mg until you have a healthy bowel movement.
- *Get enough magnesium.* Magnesium relaxes the muscles in the colon, which can alleviate constipation. Magnesium is found in green leafy vegetables and whole grains. If you are constipated, you may want to include more of these foods and also try a magnesium supplement such as magnesium glycinate or magnesium citrate. A dosage of 200-500 mg per day is usually enough to alleviate constipation.
- *Try digestive enzymes.* For some people, constipation is caused by lack of digesting food properly. If you experience bloating or discomfort after meals that is related to constipation, you may want to try taking a digestive enzyme supplement with meals.
- *Try a salt water flush.* Prior to going to bed, drink a large glass (12-16 ounces) of lukewarm water with 1 teaspoon of sea salt dissolved in it. The saltiness of the water acts as a laxative and should promote a bowel movement the next morning. Do not try this if you have high blood pressure, kidney problems, or other sensitivities to salt.
- *As a last resort, try herbal laxatives.* Herbal laxatives such as senna or turkey rhubarb stimulate the muscles in the colon. They are good for a short-term resolution to constipation but should not be taken regularly as they may cause dependency.