

## Managing nutritional concerns: Constipation

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Constipation can be caused by certain cancer treatments as well as nausea and pain medications, change in diet, or a decrease in your usual activity level. Constipation occurs when your stool becomes hard, dry, and difficult to pass. Your bowel movements may be less frequent, painful, and accompanied by cramps, gas, or bleeding. You may feel bloated and nauseous.<sup>1</sup>

**Tips For People Experiencing Constipation<sup>2,3</sup>:**

- Be sure to stay hydrated. Drink a minimum of 8-10 8 oz glasses of fluid per day
- Consuming warm liquids may help to stimulate a bowel movement
- Consume foods rich in dietary fiber such as bran, whole grain breads, rice, cereal, and pastas as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, beans, and nuts
- If bowel gas is a concern, limit gas-producing foods such as carbonated beverages, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, peas, beans, onions, and raw peppers. Also limit swallowing air by not drinking through a straw or chewing gum
- Stay active. A short walk may help treat and prevent constipation
- Speak to your physician if you find that dietary management does not help to improve bowel movements, as you may need medication to help promote regularity

**Always communicate with your doctor or nurse about what you are experiencing. Contact your MD if you have not had a bowel movement in 2-3 days or if you are having unusual pain or discomfort, or bleeding from your rectum.**

#### **References:**

1. Constipation. American Cancer Society.  
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3. American Institute for Cancer Research, Savor Health and LIVESTRONG. *Heal Well: A Cancer Nutrition Guide*. 2013.  
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