What is Constipation?

Constipation is a common problem. It affects millions of people around the world. Constipation makes it difficult to pass stool.

WHAT DOES CONSTIPATION FEEL LIKE?

- ☐ Stool that is small, hard or dry
- ☐ Stool that is difficult to pass
- ☐ Pain while passing stool
- ☐ Belly pain, gas, or nausea
- ☐ Passing stool only 1 or 2 times a week
- ☐ Feeling like your bowel movement is not finished



Everyone has constipation sometimes. Different people experience constipation in different ways. You might not feel the same as someone else with constipation.

WHAT CAUSES CONSTIPATION?

Constipation can happen for many reasons. For some people, more than one thing causes it.

- Not eating enough fiber
- Not drinking enough water
- Not moving the body enough
- □ Taking certain medications
- ☐ Having other medical conditions

WHEN SHOULD I SEE A HEALTH PROVIDER?

- ☐ If you have constipation for weeks or months
- ☐ If you see blood on the stool or toilet paper
- ☐ If it is very painful for you to pass stool
- ☐ If you are constipated and losing weight without trying

HOW CAN I PREVENT CONSTIPATION?

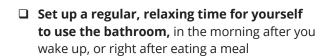
- ☐ Eat more fiber (goal 20-35 grams a day)
 - □ Fruits
 - Vegetables, legumes
 - Whole grains
- ☐ Eat on a regular schedule
- ☐ **Drink more water** (at least 2 liters a day)



For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit nciph.org/constipation







- ☐ Give yourself plenty of time in the bathroom—don't rush!
- **Exercise**—moving your body can help move the stool through your gut

HOW CAN I TREAT CONSTIPATION?

The following natural treatments might help with your constipation. If you take medications or have other medical problems, talk to your doctor about trying these treatments.

- □ Fiber supplements
 - Psyllium
 - □ Flaxseed
 - ☐ Glucomannan
- ☐ Laxatives these can make the bowels move

faster. There are different kinds of laxatives.

- ☐ "osmotic" laxatives like magnesium work by helping pull water into the gut to make stools softer. These are very safe.
- "stimulant" laxatives like senna work by causing the muscles in the gut to contract. These can work well but you can become dependent on them which is not healthy for you
- $\hfill \Box$ **Probiotics** – bacteria that is friendly to the gut
 - ☐ Bifidobacterium animalis
 - Lactobacillus rhamnosus
- ☐ **Biofeedback** can help coordinate the muscles in your pelvic area to make it easier to pass stool
- **Acupuncture** can sometimes help with constipation.



www.nciph.org Updated October 2016

PATIENT NOTES	

