

Health and Wellness

Consti – sh sh – pation (what’s important to know and why):

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Introduction

What is typically accepted by most people as a part of daily living should rather be considered as something to be figured out for each person’s long-term health. This embarrassing topic is constipation. Now, if necessary, reread that first sentence again for the full magnitude.

Although a very delicate topic, I intentionally chose it for three reasons: (1) constipation is the most common digestive complaint in the United States with millions suffering from it (including 10% of all U.S. children); (2) with few exceptions, all Americans will suffer from constipation at some point in their lives; and (3) irregularity can wreak havoc on anyone’s health and the implications of poor digestive health are enormous. In fact, when the transit time of food through the digestive tract slows down and decomposed waste lingers in the colon longer than it should, toxins enter the bloodstream through the intestinal wall. This process can lead to autointoxication which causes an increased risk of significant health problems ranging from headaches to autoimmune disorders and other problems. Because 70-75% of our immune system resides in our "gut", this is especially important. In other words, being constipated (*knowingly or unknowingly*) can cause many illnesses including any of the over 80 types of autoimmune-system illnesses. Also, women who are chronically constipated are four times more likely to develop breast cancer.

A significant difference of opinion exists in the medical community concerning the number of bowel movements (BMs) each person should be having in the first place. That range is all the way from two to three healthy BMs each day to three times per week. While I tend to simply present the facts rather than interjecting an opinion, because of this vast disparity, here is my belief: simply stated – if you are eating every day, you should be pooping every day. It’s a matter of ensuring that toxic waste is eliminated each and every day.

Tips:

Here are the basics for reducing and eliminating constipation as much as possible for each and every family member:

- 1) **Drink enough water** – as a general guideline, a 160 lb. person should be drinking 80 ounces of water daily;
- 2) **Eat on a regular schedule** – by eating on a schedule, the body is given a chance to regulate elimination;
- 3) **Consume enough soluble and insoluble fiber** – most physicians agree that 35 grams of fiber daily is adequate.

Most people only consume 10-15 grams per day. Fiber sources are fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and non-artificial fiber supplements. Also, cut back on low-fiber foods such as red meats, cheeses, and processed foods;

4) **Incorporate flax seed oil** – for regularity and health, take one tablespoon of flax seed oil daily (available at Life Extension, Vitamin Shoppe and Whole Foods – Barlean’s Organic Cold Pressed is highly recommended);

5) **Use (good quality) probiotics** – because there is a constant battleground in everyone’s intestines between harmful bacteria and friendly bacteria, the importance of taking probiotics (the friendly bacteria that populate the intestinal tract and keep it healthy) cannot be overemphasized. Other benefits which are often seen while taking probiotics are significantly less colds and overall improved health;

6) **Get Exercise** – engage in regular proper exercise, a healthy weight and overall fitness for regularity. One of the best ways to accomplish this is through a brisk walk and a regime of abdominal exercises 2-5 times/week;

7) **Take Magnesium** – what will work for one person will not work for another. The only way to find out is to try. What keeps me running smoothly (so to speak) is taking 500-1,000 mg of Magnesium daily in a capsule form from Life Extension (<https://www.lifeextension.com/Vitamins-Supplements/item01459/Magnesium-Caps>). Although I personally don’t have a problem with sleeping, since it helps people with their sleep, Magnesium is best taken before bedtime; and

8) **React Timely** – responding to one’s body signals to pass stool will also help keep BMs regular. However, resisting the urge to move one’s bowels for too long can result in impaction and other health issues.

As long as we’re already on this difficult topic anyway, the importance of ensuring that there is no red on the toilet paper after a BM for each family member is critical. Going to a gastroenterologist physician immediately in such a case is the first order of business. For anyone 50 years old or older, get a colonoscopy. While I would have preferred that humor could have been interspersed throughout this article for comic relief, that desire was unfortunately not accomplished. Humorist author Dave Barry knows how to get this job done. See Link No. 2 below for a comic and albeit serious look at the importance of a timely colonoscopy.

Notes:

(1) Some people might be using enemas or stimulant laxatives on a regular basis. It is critical to understand that either should only be used in severe cases occasionally and temporarily if the above-numbered eight items as well as stool softeners do not provide enough relief.

(2) Though I chose the topic, I appreciate your fortitude on lesser-discussed topics for everyone’s wellbeing.

This short article does very little justice to this significant and magnanimous topic because there is so much more to know. Please learn more and ensure that each and every member of your family is not constipated (by having a private 1-1 talk) and obtains competent and comprehensive medical care from a nutritionally-informed physician in a timely manner.

Sources Used:

As with most other health topics, there is a lot to learn and know. Listed below are some links used:

(A) <http://www.miamiherald.com/2009/02/11/427603/dave-barry-a-journey-into-my-colon.html>

(B) http://www.thepreventionsocialworker.org/uploads/LEF_-_Constipation.pdf

(C) <http://www.webmd.com/digestive-disorders/ss/slideshow-constipation-facts-10>

(D) <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003125.htm>

(E) <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/constipation.html>

(F) http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill_injure/sick/constipation.html

(G) <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/constipation/DS00063>

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