

FAST FACTS: CONSTIPATION

WHAT IT IS

Constipation is infrequent or difficult-to-pass bowel movements. Constipation is generally described as having fewer than three bowel movements per week. Your bowel movements are your body's natural way of detoxing and can tell you a lot about your health.

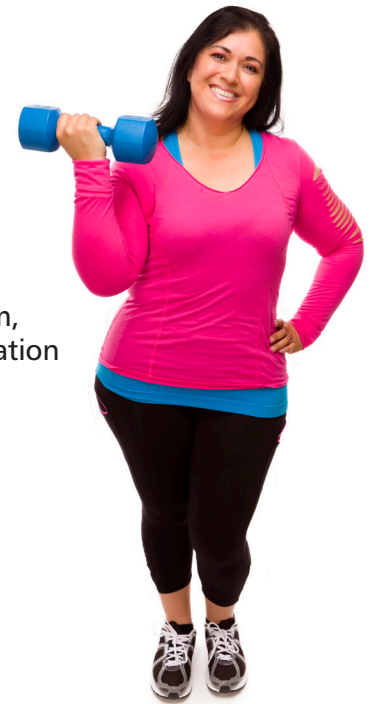
CAUSES

Constipation most commonly occurs when waste or stool moves too slowly through the digestive tract or cannot be eliminated effectively from the rectum, which may cause the stool to become hard and dry. Some reasons for constipation may include:

- emotional stress slowing down the digestive tract
- dehydration
- eating a diet low in fiber, low in magnesium
- tense pelvic floor muscles
- getting little or no physical activity
- certain medications

TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT

- Fluids: Drink at least six to eight, 8 ounce glasses of fluid per day (unless contraindicated). Avoid alcoholic beverages or caffeine.
- Magnesium is an important mineral. It is great for constipation. Before taking magnesium, please consult with your provider first.
- A non-processed, high fiber diet (under age 50, 25g per day and over age 50, 21g per day) is recommended. Eat nourishing foods low in sugar, including plenty of fresh vegetables and greens, lean protein, healthy fats. Also, remember to chew your food! Thoroughly chewing your food promotes healthy digestion.
- Go when you need to. Putting off a bowel movement can cause constipation.
- Exercise! Exercise stimulates the muscles in your digestive tract so food keeps moving through your intestines at a healthy pace.
- Change your position. Try putting your feet up on a stool, or get a Squatty Potty®. This creates a position that is closer to a natural squat, which straightens the colon, making elimination easier.
- Reduce stress. Stress can slow down digestion. Practice stress reduction techniques such as yoga, deep breathing and meditation.
- Physical therapy staff trained in pelvic floor dysfunction can help manage constipation with a goal of resuming normal bowel function.



DID YOU KNOW?

Constipation is often a cause of urinary frequency, urgency and urinary incontinence. The bladder and the colon are close together in the body. Large amounts of stool in the colon add pressure to the bladder, causing the bladder to not fill as much as it should. It may also cause bladder contractions. Often when a person is no longer constipated, urinary frequency, leakage and urgency can improve.

Call the Allegan Pelvic Wellness Center to schedule an initial consultation at (269) 686-4355.

