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THIS MONTH:

## Constipation

# Holistic Health Check

### What's normal?

The frequency of defecation and the consistency and volume of stools vary so greatly between people that it's difficult to determine what's normal. Proper elimination is very important as the bowel is a potential source of toxins that could lead to the development of migraines, skin problems or more serious diseases.

Poor bowel habits can lead to haemorrhoids. In general you try to have two to three bowel movements per day, which is typical of healthy people eating a high-fibre diet and getting enough exercise.

Bowel transit time can be checked to measure how long it takes for a substance to be eliminated through the bowel. Ideally it should take 18 to 24 hours for food to completely move through your digestive tract. This indicates that you are probably breaking down and absorbing well. Swallow four charcoal tablets with your evening meal and record how long it takes for a black/grey stool to appear and then to clear completely.

### Some of the causes of constipation

- Highly refined and low-fibre foods
- Inadequate fluid intake
- Gluten intolerance
- Inadequate exercise
- Pregnancy
- Advanced age
- Drugs, including over use of antibiotics
- Metabolic and hormonal imbalances
- Bowel diseases
- Reliance on laxatives leads to a 'lazy bowel'



### What can I do to prevent it?

- Dietary fibre increases bowel movements, decreases transit time of stools and decreases absorption of toxins.
- Fruits and vegetables that lubricate the intestines are sour apples, apricots, pears, prunes, peaches; carrots, cauliflower, beetroot, spinach and alfalfa sprouts.
- Foods that promote bowel movement are papaya, cabbage, peas, lentils, asparagus, sweet potato, rice and oat bran and figs.
- Bowel flora is important for breaking down waste matter. To promote good bowel flora include the following in your diet: miso, sauerkraut, bio-yoghurt, chlorophyll-rich foods such as dark greens and sea greens.
- Herbal teas for the bowels include lemon balm, peppermint, chamomile and liquorice.
- Add ground flaxseeds to your fruit and salads. Drink at least two litres of mineral water a day.

### Get in the habit...

- Try some sort of exercise for at least 20 minutes three times a week
- Never repress an urge to defecate
- Sit on the toilet at the same time every morning (even when the urge to defecate is not present) but do not strain to pass a motion
- Stop using laxatives, except to re-establish regular bowel activity

### Treat yourself

**Try following this course of action for a couple of days. If there is no improvement after this contact your health practitioner.**

#### Morning

- Ten minutes after rising, drink the juice of a freshly squeezed lemon diluted in a glass of warm water.
- 15 minutes later take a dessert spoonful of flaxseed oil (optionally mixed with live yoghurt).
- Eat breakfast with two herbal laxatives capsules, and a glass of water mixed with 15 to 20ml of aloe vera juice.
- Follow this with one dessert spoonful of linseeds, which have been soaked in water overnight.

#### Evening

- Drink a glass of water mixed with 20ml of aloe vera juice.
- Evening meal with two herbal laxatives capsules.
- Half an hour after eating, take one dessert spoonful of loose psyllium husks mixed with tepid water.

### Remember...

**Massage can be really helpful. Dilute oils of chamomile, ginger, lavender or fennel with sesame seed oil and massage the abdomen in a clockwise direction. Also, try massaging the web between your thumb and index finger.**