

Integrative Approach to Constipation

Prevention Prescription

- Eat high amounts of fiber-rich foods, including beans, vegetables, fruits, whole grain cereals, and bran. Include a *gradually* increasing amount of fiber in the diet up to 20 to 25 g a day through fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and unrefined cereals, flax, or bran. Ensure an adequate amount of fiber in the diet. Use the *age + 5 = daily grams of fiber* rule as a general guideline for dosing.
- Increase fluid intake and, in particular, the amount of sorbitol-containing fruit juices (e.g., apple, pear) for osmotic effect
- Minimize high-fat, low-fiber foods such as processed foods, dairy products, and meat products.
- Drink an adequate amount of fluid each day to stay hydrated, and increase the amount of water if using higher doses of fiber.
- Engage in regular physical activity to avoid constipation.
- Adopt a good self-care and stress management program to avoid the impact of stress on gut function.
- Stay tuned to the body's natural signals to pass stool.
- Take advantage of the gastrocolic reflex and allow elimination to occur after meals.
- Consider a probiotic strain of *Bifidobacterium* or *Lactobacillus* of at least 10^8 colony-forming units.
- Yoga and Acupuncture has been found helpful for relief of chronic constipation.

Pharmaceuticals

Type of Medication	Selected Medications	Recommended Dosage for Maintenance Therapy
Bulk-forming laxatives (OTC)	Methylcellulose (Citrucel) powder	Older than 12 yr: 4–6 g/dose
Dietary fiber (OTC) supplement (no systemic absorption)	Psyllium (Metamucil, Perdiem, Serutan, Fiberall, Konsyl)	Older than 12 yr: 1–2 rounded teaspoons or one to two packets or one to two wafers one to four times/day or five capsules up to three times/day taken with 8 oz liquid
Osmotic laxative (OTC)	Magnesium hydroxide (Milk of Magnesia [MOM]); liquid, tablets	Older than 12 yr: 30–60 mL/day or in divided doses six to eight tablets before bedtime
	Magnesium citrate	Older than 12 yr: 150–300 mL/day, in single or divided doses

Type of Medication	Selected Medications	Recommended Dosage for Maintenance Therapy
Lubricants	Mineral oil (OTC)	Older than 12 yr: 15–45 mL/day every day or in divided doses or 1–4 mL/kg/day
Fiber supplement (OTC); powder, chewable tablets, caplets	Benefiber (partially hydrolyzed guar gum): 2 teaspoon = 3 g soluble fiber	12 yr–adult: 1–2 tablespoon one to three times/day
Stool softeners (emollients)	Docusate (Colace); liquid, capsule, gel cap (OTC)	Older than 12 yr: 50–400 mg/day in one to four divided doses
Stimulants	Senna (Senokot, Senna-Gen, Senolax, Ex-Lax); granules, syrup, tablets (OTC)	5–15 yr: 10–20 mL/day One tablet = 3 mL/granules = 5 mL/syrup
Osmotic enema	Phosphate enema (OTC)	Older than 11 yr: 4.5-oz adult enema
Osmotic laxative	MiraLax (polyethylene glycol); GlycoLax	12 yr or older: 17 g (up to measuring line on cap) in 8 oz of water
Stimulant laxative	Bisacodyl (Dulcolax)Dulcolax: 5-mg tablet, 10-mg suppository	Older than 2 yr: one half to one suppository or one to three tablets per dose; no liquid form Adolescents: four tablets maximum
Suppository	Glycerin suppository	Children >6 yr: one adult suppository
Miscellaneous	Glycerin enema; Enemeez Mini Enema (ingredients: docusate, polyethylene glycol, glycerin)	5–10 mL glycerin in 500 mL normal saline solution 5-mL tubes: one enema/day
Osmotic laxative	Lactulose (Enulose, Lactulox); crystals, syrup	Adults: 15–30 mL/day (maximum, 60 mL/day)
	Sorbitol	1–3 mL/kg/day in divided doses, 70% solution

Source: Integrative Medicine 3rd Edition, David Rakel.