

CONSTIPATION WORKSHEET

Digestive health and specific problems, like constipation, can be improved through dietary and lifestyle changes. Check the items listed on this worksheet to indicate actions you can take to improve your constipation. Discuss any problems that may persist with your doctor.

Dietary Changes

- Drink at least eight cups of fluid per day.
- Be sure you are eating 20–30 grams of fiber per day. Good examples are prunes, pears, nuts, grains, ground flaxseed and bran.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, multigrain breads and cereals. Eat smaller meals several times per day, rather than three large meals.
- Avoid high-sugar foods and snacks.
- Choose high-fiber bread (>5 grams fiber) instead of refined white or wheat bread.
- Try homeopathic herbal teas blended to help relieve constipation.
- Try drinking a caffeinated warm beverages with earlier meals, but avoid carbonated beverages if bloating is a problem.

Lifestyle Changes

- Exercise! At least take a walk daily, if possible. A physical therapist can help you get started with an exercise routine that's right for you.
- Try to maintain good posture while doing cardio or strengthening exercises.

Medication Recommendations

(Note: talk to your doctor before beginning)

- Stool softeners once or twice a day can help. You can also try a stool softener with a stimulant if you experience moderate to severe constipation.
- Glycolax powder (like Miralax) can be purchased over the counter and is very effective, has few side effects and can be used daily if needed.
- Consider taking once-a-day supplements, such as fish oil, flaxseed oil or magnesium.
- Avoid excessive use of fiber supplements such as Metamucil or Citrucel as they can sometimes worsen constipation and lead to obstruction.

EVERY VICTORY COUNTS

▶ **Other Treatment**

- Ask your doctor about medications you may be taking that can worsen constipation, such as amantadine, amitriptyline and sedatives.
- Consider seeing a gastroenterologist, a specialist who treats constipation.
- Occupational therapy can help establish a bowel routine or regimen.
- Ask your doctor for a nutrition consult if you need more help with dietary changes.