

What can I do about constipation?

What are signs of constipation?

- Fewer bowel movements (BMs) than usual for you. If you normally have a BM once per day, constipation might be defined as having a BM every third day. Constipation is a consistent change, not a one-time occurrence.
- If you are constipated, you might also feel like:
 - Your BMs are too hard or too dry.
 - Your BMs are hard to start or to get out/pass.
 - You have a lot of gas or bloating.
 - You have stomach cramps.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you haven't had a BM in more than three days, or if you feel constipated.

Things that may help with constipation:

- Try to have a bowel movement at the same time every day; colon reflexes are usually strongest 10-15 minutes after eating breakfast. When you feel the urge to go, don't wait.
- Exercise, such as going for a walk, can help.
- Take time to relax and enjoy your meals on a routine schedule.
- Drink fluids (8-10 cups of fluid per day) and eat foods containing water to help keep your stool soft. Drinking warm fluids may help more.
- Eat foods that are high in fiber (unless they bother you), such as:
 - Bran, oatmeal, whole grain cereals, and breads Dried fruits (e.g., apricots, figs, prunes, raisins)
 - Raw, unpeeled fruits and vegetables, and salads Nuts, popcorn, and coconut

Things to avoid that *might* make constipation worse:

- Drinks with caffeine or alcohol, such as soda, coffee, beer, wine, and liquor (limit of 1-2 per day)
- · Milk or milk products, such as ice cream, milkshakes, and cheese
- Greasy and fried foods, such as French fries and hamburgers

If you are constipated, we recommend the following bowel regimen:

Step 1: Take two senna tablets at bedtime.

- If you have a BM the next day, continue taking two senna tablets at bedtime.
- If you do not have a BM the next day, move to Step 2.

Step 2: Take two senna tablets after breakfast and two tablets at bedtime.

- If you have a BM by bedtime or by morning, continue taking senna (two tablets) in the morning and at bedtime.
- If you do not have a BM before the morning, move to Step 3.

Step 3: Take three senna tablets after breakfast.

- If you have a BM by the evening, continue taking three senna tablets in the morning and two at bedtime
- If you do not have a BM by the evening, take three senna tablets at bedtime.
- If you have loose BMs (diarrhea) on any day, go back to the previous step.
- Store-brand senna or name-brand senna can be used.

Call your nurse if:

- Three or more days pass without a BM
- You have any ◆ fever, ◆ pain in your stomach or difficulty gas, ◆ nausea or vomiting, or ◆ if your stomach looks swollen or hard.

Notes	

Supported by an independent educational grant from AstraZeneca