

If you have a pre-existing health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, etc. please be aware the suggestions in this brochure may not be appropriate.

What is constipation?

Having fewer bowel movements than usual for you with difficulty passing stools.

Constipation Facts

There is no right number of daily or weekly bowel movements ... for some, regularity may mean two bowel movements a day or three or four a week.

What about laxatives?

Avoid overuse of laxatives, as this may lead to dependence on them, and may make constipation worse. Use laxatives as occasional remedies only.

Why should a person with Parkinson's worry about constipation?

The absorption of your medication can be slowed and benefit minimized.

If not treated, there is a possibility the bowel could twist and cause a blockage.

Instead of worrying, take action. There are solutions!

You should see your doctor if there are sudden changes in your bowel habits or if you have been constipated for some time. If you experience a sudden onset of acute abdominal pain – along with persistent constipation – get immediate medical attention.

A more detailed bowel management program to prevent and relieve constipation is available by calling 1-800-565-3000.



Parkinson Society Canada is a national organization with regional partners from coast to coast. We share a vision to ease the burden and find a cure through advocacy, education, research and support services to improve quality of life for all those affected by Parkinson's.

Call your local Parkinson office for information, programs and services in your area, or to make a donation.

 Parkinson Society Canada
Société Parkinson Canada

Parkinson's: What you can do to prevent and relieve constipation

Ease the Burden; Find a Cure

One in a series of brochures produced by

 Parkinson Society Canada
Société Parkinson Canada

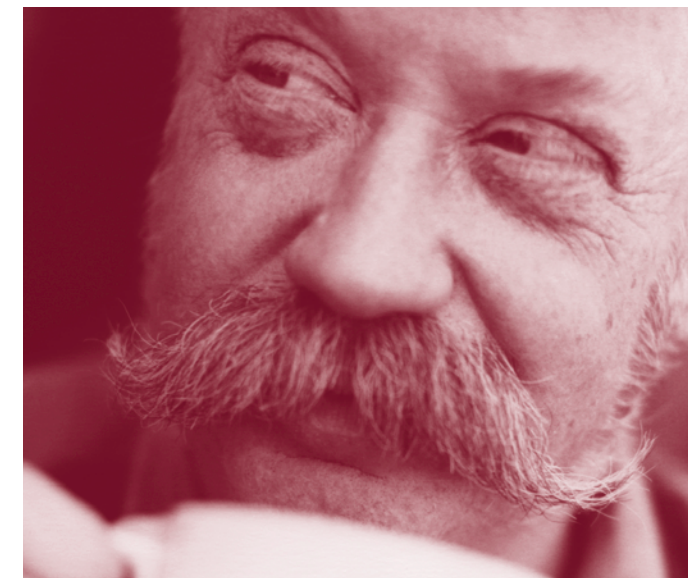
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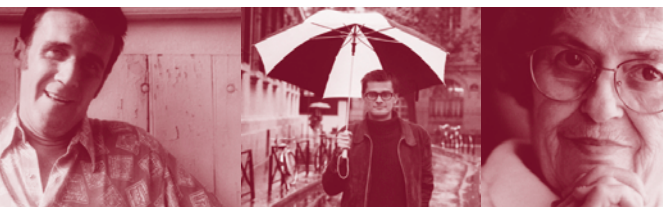
Ease the Burden; Find a Cure



For the majority of people with Parkinson's, constipation can be a major problem. If you're constipated, it can be caused by a variety of factors:

- your intestines move more slowly because of your Parkinson's ... it's also difficult to expel a normal stool
- the medication you take
- not enough exercise
- a low-fibre diet
- dehydration and not enough fluids
- ignoring the natural urge to have a bowel movement
- overuse of laxatives

There are certain dietary and lifestyle changes you can make to help prevent constipation. Do not be embarrassed to talk about it with your doctor or pharmacist and seek his/her advice.



Stay active

Exercise helps promote regularity. Find an activity you enjoy and make it part of your daily routine. When the weather is nice, walk with a friend or pet. If you can't go outside, walk briskly around a local mall or up and down the hallway or stairs of your home or apartment – several times a day.

Find out about exercise programs in your area. You can also visit www.parkinson.ca for more information.

Eat right

You can become constipated if you don't have enough fibre in your diet. Why is fibre important? High-fibre foods and plenty of water are needed to keep stools soft, bulky and easy to pass.

Excellent sources of fibre:

- unpeeled apples, raspberries, potatoes with the skin on, broccoli, green beans, pea soup, bean salad, baked beans

Good sources of fibre:

- whole-wheat grain products – breads, rolls, crackers and pasta
- high-fibre cereal like oatmeal and bran cereal – check the nutrition label to ensure there are at least 4 grams of dietary fibre per serving
- legumes – cooked dried peas, beans and lentils
- fruits and vegetables with edible skin – cooked or raw – nuts and dried fruit such as apricots, dates, figs and raisins; dried prunes are especially effective
- brown rice

Increasing the fibre in your diet requires a conscious effort on your part. Do it gradually over a period of six to eight weeks. A sudden increase in fibre could cause cramping and/or gas. It will take a long-term commitment to make the changes necessary to improve regularity and maintain a well-balanced diet.



Drink plenty of fluids

When you eat more high-fibre foods, you need to drink more water. Increase your water intake slowly until you're up to at least eight glasses a day. Hot liquids often stimulate bowel activity – try a glass of hot lemon water first thing in the morning. If you're going out, take water with you. Avoid drinking after dinner, to prevent frequent waking during the night for washroom visits.

Other helpful advice

- establish good bowel habits. Try to establish a regular time to at least try to have a bowel movement; take your time
- look for cookbooks with high-fibre menu ideas. Try either of these fruit-lax recipes.

Soak 1 pound mixed dried fruit in cranberry juice overnight. Chop in blender and store in refrigerator. Have 1/2 to 1 cup of the mixture every morning with cereal or yogurt.

Soak 1/2 cup each of dried raisins, dates, and dried prunes overnight in enough water to cover them. Chop in blender and add 1/2 cup of molasses and 1/4 cup of wheat bran. Store in refrigerator. Take 2 tablespoons every morning.

- eat meals and snacks at regular times
- don't skip meals, especially breakfast
- ask your doctor to refer you to a qualified dietitian for menu advice
- turn to friends and family for help with shopping and cooking, if you need it

Medications can be used to treat constipation if diet and lifestyle changes do not help

- psyllium (e.g. Metamucil) adds bulk and is usually the first choice; you need to drink plenty of fluid with it (at least 1 full glass) to avoid worsening the constipation. Try splitting the once daily dose into three doses
- a stool softener, lactulose syrup (e.g. Acilac or Duphalac) or glycerin suppositories can help to soften stools and make them easier to pass
- stimulant laxatives (e.g. senokot, bisacodyl, cascara) help the bowels move; one of these agents can be used if other medications are not effective
- enemas (e.g. Fleet) are usually reserved for prolonged constipation but typically produce fast results and more than one bowel movement; use an enema in the morning to avoid nighttime bowel movements

Ask your pharmacist or doctor for more advice on medications for constipation or on correct doses or suggestions.