



Constipation

Information for people living in or visiting the residential aged care facility

Constipation is when your bowel motion is hard and dry and you don't go to the toilet as often as usual.

Constipation makes you feel uncomfortable and unwell.

It can cause pain, nausea, poor appetite and weight loss.

Untreated constipation can be serious.

Constipation is not normal and it can be prevented.

Signs you may be constipated

- Your bowel motion is hard and lumpy.
- You feel pain, discomfort or straining when trying to use your bowels.
- You're not going to the toilet as often as usual.
- You feel bloated and nauseous.
- You have pain or discomfort in your stomach.
- There is bleeding from your bottom after going to the toilet.
- You don't feel empty after you use your bowels.
- You have lost your appetite.

Ways to prevent constipation

- Eat food that is high in fibre, and foods like prunes or figs.
- Make sure you have plenty to drink.
- Do as much exercise as you can, even if you are in bed (staff can help).
- Go to the toilet as soon as you feel the need and don't hold on.
- Tell staff how often you usually use your bowels, and if you notice any changes.
- Let staff know if the toilet is hard to get to or at the wrong height for you.
- Also, if you don't have enough privacy or if you need help to get to the toilet.
- Ask to have your medicines reviewed to see if they could be causing constipation.



Ways to manage constipation

There are many ways to treat constipation, depending on what is causing it.

- Increase how much fibre you eat.
- Drink more fluids (unless you have a fluid limit).
- Do more exercise (if you are able).

Talk to your doctor and staff about what could be causing the problem.

Your doctor may suggest medicine to help.

Tell staff if you have had constipation before and what has helped you in the past.

Working together

You, your family and friends are important members of the care team.

You know what is normal for you.

Let staff know if you are using your bowels less than normal, feel unwell or have any other signs of constipation. Don't wait to see if you get better – it's always best to get help early.

Working together with staff will help to keep you healthy and out of hospital.

Talk to staff and ask questions. They need your help to give you the best care.

Questions to ask staff

- Could my medicines be causing constipation? Can they be changed?
- Is there enough fibre in my diet?
- How much do I need to drink each day?
- How can I do more exercise?



Want to know more?

Read about [constipation](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/constipation) on Better Health Channel <<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/constipation>>.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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