

Constipation 101

Understanding why it happens and how to fix it with fiber, hydration, and simple habits

What's Actually Going On?

Constipation is one of those things nobody wants to talk about—but almost everyone experiences at some point. Simply put, it means your bowel movements are infrequent (less than 3 times per week), difficult to pass, or both. And it usually comes with bloating, discomfort, and that general "stuck" feeling.

But here's what most people don't realize: **Constipation is almost always a lifestyle issue.** It's your body's way of telling you something is off—usually a lack of fiber, not enough water, or eating habits that slow everything down.

The good news? It's one of the easiest digestive issues to fix when you know what to do.

Why It Happens



Low Fiber Intake

Not enough fruits, veggies, or whole grains



Dehydration

Not drinking enough water daily



Eating Too Fast

Not chewing food thoroughly



Hormonal Changes

PMS, pregnancy, or breastfeeding



The Fiber Problem

Fiber is like a broom for your digestive system—it sweeps everything through and keeps things moving. Without enough fiber, food moves sluggishly through your intestines, water gets absorbed, and everything gets... stuck.

Most people only get about **10-15 grams of fiber per day** when they should be getting **25-35 grams**. That's a huge gap! And it usually comes down to not eating enough fruits, vegetables, and fiber-rich carbs.

Quick Fiber Math

If you eat 1-2 fruits, 4-5 vegetables, and 2-3 servings of high-fiber carbs each day, you'll easily hit your fiber goal. No supplements needed—just real food.

Best High-Fiber Carbs

These are your constipation-fighting superstars. Try to include 2-3 servings of these throughout your day:

Sweet Potatoes

1 medium

~4g fiber

Beans

½ cup cooked

~6-8g fiber

Oats

½ cup dry

~4g fiber

Lentils

½ cup cooked

~8g fiber

Carrots

1 cup chopped

Pro tip: Oats at breakfast, lentils at lunch, sweet potato at dinner = fiber covered for the day!

⌚ The Water Connection

Here's the thing about fiber—it needs water to work. Without adequate hydration, fiber can actually make constipation worse because it bulks up but can't move through easily. Think of it like trying to wash dishes without water.

Daily Water Target

2-3 Liters

That's about 8-12 cups per day

⌚ Need More? (3 Liters)

- If you're pregnant
- If you're breastfeeding
- If you're working out regularly

⌚ The Protein Problem

Here's something nobody talks about: **the obsession with protein might be part of the problem.**

With all the "eat more protein!" messaging out there, people are cramming in protein shakes, chicken breasts, and protein bars—while also trying to hit their fiber goals. The result? Too much of everything, not enough balance, and a digestive system that's overwhelmed.

All that fiber + all that protein = bloating, gas, and constipation. Your gut is sending you a clear signal: **your amounts are off.**

⚖️ Finding Your Balance

The truth is, protein needs vary from person to person. There's no magic number that works for everyone. If you're constipated and bloated:

1. Try lowering your protein intake slightly

2. Bring up your complex carbs (oats, sweet potatoes, lentils)
3. Add more vegetables to each meal
4. Adjust until you find your happy medium

Your body will tell you when you've found the right balance—regular, comfortable digestion is the goal.

Ψ¶ The Eating Habits Factor

Just like with acid reflux and bloating, **how you eat matters as much as what you eat**. When you eat too fast and don't chew your food properly, your digestive system has to work overtime to break everything down. This slows transit time and can lead to constipation.

The Fix:

- Chew each bite 20-30 times before swallowing
- Put your fork down between bites
- Take at least 20 minutes to finish each meal
- Don't eat while distracted (scrolling, working, driving)

♡ Hormonal Changes & Constipation

Ladies, if you notice constipation gets worse at certain times of the month—you're not imagining it. Hormonal shifts play a big role in digestive function:

During PMS

Rising progesterone in the second half of your cycle slows down digestion. It's called "progesterone's relaxing effect"—your intestinal muscles relax and move food more slowly.

During Pregnancy

Progesterone is even higher during pregnancy, plus your growing uterus puts pressure on your intestines. Constipation is extremely common—that's why hydration and fiber are extra important.

While Breastfeeding

You're losing extra fluids through milk production. If you're not drinking more water to compensate, dehydration can slow things down.

The solution? Be extra mindful about fiber and water during these times. Your body needs more support when hormones are shifting.

Your Daily Fiber Targets

Focus on loading up at **breakfast and lunch**—this gives your body time to process the fiber throughout the day. Here's what to aim for:

Fruits

1-2 servings

An apple with breakfast, berries as a snack

Leafy Greens

At least 1 serving

Spinach salad, sautéed kale, mixed greens

Vegetables

4-5 servings

Carrots, broccoli, peppers, zucchini, tomatoes

Complex Carbs

2-3 servings

Oats at breakfast, lentils at lunch, sweet potato at dinner

A Sample High-Fiber Day

BREAKFAST

Oatmeal Bowl

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup oats + berries + chia seeds + water or unsweetened almond milk

~8g fiber

LUNCH

Lentil Salad

½ cup lentils + spinach + carrots + cucumber + olive oil dressing

~12g fiber

DINNER

Protein + Sweet Potato

Grilled protein + medium sweet potato + roasted broccoli + side salad

~10g fiber

Total: ~30g fiber + 2-3 liters water = happy digestion! 🌟

Your Constipation Relief Checklist

Daily Habits:

- ✓ Drink 2-3 liters of water (3L if pregnant/nursing/active)
- ✓ Eat 1-2 servings of fruit
- ✓ Include at least 1 leafy green
- ✓ Eat 4-5 servings of vegetables
- ✓ Include 2-3 high-fiber carbs
- ✓ Chew thoroughly—20-30 times per bite
- ✓ Front-load fiber at breakfast & lunch

Avoid:

- ✗ Eating too fast or while distracted
- ✗ Skipping meals (especially breakfast)
- ✗ Relying on processed/low-fiber foods
- ✗ Ignoring the urge to go
- ✗ Being sedentary all day