Getting Relief for Your Constipation

What Is Constipation?

Constipation is a very common condition of the digestive system where you can have infrequent stools that are hard, lumpy, difficult to pass, and uncomfortable. Some people can also have stomach pain or cramps, feel bloated, strain when going to the bathroom, or feel like they haven't fully emptied their bowels.

Lifestyle Changes to Help Improve Constipation Symptoms

You can help keep your bowels regular by:

- Eating foods that are rich in fiber, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and nuts
- Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water
- Getting regular physical activity
- Using the bathroom as soon as you can if you have the urge to have a bowel movement and not hold it in

Treating Constipation

If you're having problems with constipation, talk to your doctor or healthcare provider. There are medicines available to help treat constipation that they may be able to recommend.

Types of medicines that help with constipation may include:

- Stool softeners that make it easier for the stool to pass
- Laxatives that can make it easier to have a bowel movement and relieve other symptoms of constipation. There are different types of laxatives available, so be sure to talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about which one may be right for you
- Prescription medicines that may be helpful for people who don't get enough relief from nonprescription medicines and lifestyle changes

Be sure to tell your doctor or healthcare provider about any health conditions you have and any medicines you take -- including those you can get without a prescription -- as well as any herbals and supplements, as some can cause constipation or make it worse.

Questions you can ask your doctor or healthcare provider about constipation can include:

What may be causing my constipation?

Are there any lifestyle or diet changes I can make that might help?

What treatments are available, and what are their side effects?

How long should I take medicine for my constipation?