

# Constipation and Urine Control

## What You Should Know



### Constipation and Urine Control

If you have bladder leaks, you may notice they get worse when you are constipated. That's because when you are constipated, your colon gets larger and places more pressure on your bladder. This can make you feel like you have to urinate more urgently and more often. This is called overactive bladder (OAB).

Having an overactive bladder may also cause you to avoid drinking fluids. This can increase your risk of developing constipation.

### What is Constipation?

Constipation happens when you go too long without having a bowel movement. For most people, going longer than three days without having a bowel movement is too long. This is because your stool gets harder and more difficult to pass. People who are constipated also may have:

- hard, dry or lumpy stools
- straining to pass stool
- a feeling of fullness, even after passing stool
- pain during bowel movements

### What Causes Constipation?

Causes of constipation include:

- Not drinking enough water
- Not eating enough fiber
- Eating too much dairy, sugary foods or high-fat meat
- Not getting enough exercise
- Ignoring the urge to move your bowels

- Certain medical conditions such as stroke, diabetes or a blockage in the intestines
- Pregnancy
- Certain medications including drugs used to treat depression, antacids containing aluminum or calcium, iron supplements, some allergy medicines (antihistamines), certain painkillers, some drugs for high blood pressure, including diuretics and some drugs used to treat Parkinson's disease.

### What is Overactive Bladder (OAB)?

Constipation can make overactive bladder (OAB) symptoms worse. If you have OAB, it can be hard to get through the day without many visits to the bathroom. You may worry about having to be near a bathroom all the time, or about leaking urine. OAB can get in the way of work, going out with friends, exercise and sleep. OAB is the name for a group of bladder symptoms. There are three main symptoms:

- A feeling that you have to pass urine, urgently
- The need to pass urine often, day and night
- Urine leaks with the "got to go" feeling

**Constipation happens when you go too long without having a bowel movement. This can cause issues with urine control.**



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### How Can I Prevent Constipation?

By keeping healthy bowel habits, you may be able to prevent constipation and help lessen bladder leaks. To prevent constipation:

**Eat plenty of fiber.** Good sources of fiber include:

- Whole grains, such as whole wheat bread and pasta, oatmeal and bran flake cereals
- Legumes, such as lentils, black beans, kidney beans, soybeans and chickpeas
- Fruits, such as berries, apples with the skin on, oranges and pears
- Vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli, green peas and collard greens
- Nuts, such as almonds, peanuts and pecans

**Drink plenty of water** to make your stools softer and easier to pass.

**Limit low fiber** foods or foods without fiber, such as

- Chips
- Fast food
- Meat
- Prepared foods, such as some frozen meals and snack foods
- Processed foods, such as hot dogs or some microwavable dinners

**Exercise** every day to get your bowels moving.

**Timing may help**, so try to have a bowel movement at the same time every day.

**Help from drugs** like stool softeners or laxatives may be suggested by your doctor.

### When Should You See a Doctor?

Sometimes talking with a health care team may help. Strive to see a doctor about constipation if:

- Your bowel habits change
- There is blood in your stool
- You're having serious stomach pains
- You lose weight without trying
- Fiber and exercise haven't helped

### About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation – and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts. To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, **UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions** or go to **UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist** to find a doctor near you.

### Disclaimer

This information is not a tool for self-diagnosis or a substitute for professional medical advice. It is not to be used or relied on for that purpose. Please talk to your urologist or health care provider about your health concerns. Always talk to a health care provider before you start or stop any treatments, including medications. For more information, visit **UrologyHealth.org/Download** or call 800-828-7866.

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