

Constipation

Prune bars:

Try baking these bars for a healthy treat full of fiber. Prunes are helpful when you are constipated, but are high in potassium. When mixed with these grains, you can enjoy 1-2 bars a day as a high-potassium food. Find raw bran in the grocery store baking section.

1 cup chopped prunes
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1-1/2 cup rolled oats
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 cup bran
2/3 cup butter or margarine

Chop prunes. Mix with sugar, lemon juice and rind in a small saucepan. Cook, stirring over low heat until thick. Set aside. Mix remaining ingredients until crumbly. Grease 8" by 8" pan.

Press half the oat mixture onto the pan. Spread with prunes and then top with remaining oat mixture. Pat lightly. Bake at 350° F for 35 minutes. Makes 9 bars.

Why is constipation a problem?

Constipation is uncomfortable. Feeling bloated can lower your appetite. It is important for dialysis patients to eat well to stay healthy.

Usually some potassium is lost through your bowel movement, so constipation can increase your potassium level.

Peritoneal dialysis patients get less effective dialysis if their bowels do not move regularly.

Prolonged constipation can result in your bowels becoming impacted (a blockage of stool) or perforated (a tear in the lining of the bowel). This is a serious medical condition.

If you don't have a bowel movement at least every 2 to 3 days, talk with your doctor.

Your Dietitian: _____
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Dialysis patients often complain of constipation. Hard, dry stools can be uncomfortable, hard to pass and cause a bloated feeling.

There are many reasons why you may become constipated, but there are also lots of things you can do to manage the problem.



Here are some ways to ease constipation.

Increase the fiber in your diet

Fiber will increase the bulk of your stools and make them softer and easier to pass.

Try to include fiber in each meal. Increase the amount slowly so your body has a chance to adjust. Too much fiber too fast may cause gas, bloating and cramping.

Whole grains

Whole grains provide more fiber than processed or refined grains like white bread or white rice. Try whole wheat breads, rolls and crackers, whole grain pasta and brown rice.

Add a few tablespoons of a higher-fiber whole grain cereal such as All Bran™ or Bran Flakes™ to your usual cereal. Try to choose a cereal with at least 4 grams of fiber per serving. Try unsalted popcorn as a snack.

Bran

Add raw (unrefined) bran to your food. Start with a few teaspoons throughout the day. You can slowly add more, up to 3 tablespoons each day.

Try adding bran to applesauce, hot cereal, muffin or pancake batter, scrambled eggs, soups, casseroles or vegetable dishes.

Fruits and vegetables

Most fruits and vegetables are a good source of fiber.

You may be limiting fruits and vegetables to control your potassium level. Check with your dietitian about the amounts allowed for you.

The lists below are low-potassium choices that are good sources of fiber.

Instead of juices, choose whole fruits, which have more fiber. Vegetables eaten raw or cooked to the crispy tender stage have more fiber.

Fruits: all 1/2 cup servings

Applesauce	Grapes
Pineapple	Apple (1)
Berries	Pear (1)
Rhubarb	Plums (2)
Dried Cranberries	

Vegetables: all 1/2 cup servings

Broccoli	Peas
Green beans	Celery
Wax beans	Peppers
Cabbage	Carrots
Zucchini	Corn

Daily physical activity

Activity increases blood circulation and muscle tone in your intestines. This may help regulate your bowels. Try a daily walk, gentle calisthenics or stretching exercises, light gardening or housework. Work at your own pace and ability.

Start a bowel routine

Find a quiet time each day to spend in the bathroom. Allow 10-30 minutes. Always respond to your urges to have a bowel movement.

Use part of your fluid allowance as a warm beverage in the morning or before going to bed in the evening. This often helps start your bowels moving.

Speak with your doctor about a laxative or stool softener

Phosphate binders and some medications taken for pain or depression can cause constipation. Only take what your doctor suggests since some laxatives are not good for people on dialysis.

Prevention

Don't wait until you are constipated to deal with the problem. Take care each day to prevent constipation.