

Constipation? Get Going!



Dialysis patients often complain of constipation. Hard, dry stools can be uncomfortable and cause a bloated feeling.

There are many reasons why you may become constipated but there are also many things you can try 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.

Fruits and Vegetables

Most fruits and vegetables are a good source of fiber.

Since you limit fruits and vegetables to control your potassium level, check with your dietitian about the amounts allowed for you.

Eat all the servings planned for you each day. Instead of juices, choose whole fruits.

Here are some lower potassium, high fiber fruits to include.

Applesauce (1/2 cup)	Apple (1)
Pineapple (1/2 cup)	Pear (1)
Berries (1 cup)	Grapes (1 / 2 cup)
Rhubarb (1/2 cup)	Plums (2)

Try these lower potassium, high fiber vegetables more often.

Broccoli (1/2 cup)	Peas (1/2 cup)
Green beans (1/2 cup)	Celery (1/2 cup)
Wax beans (1/2 cup)	Peppers (1)
Cabbage (1/2 cup)	Carrots (1/2 cup)
Zucchini (1 / 2 cup)	Corn (1 / 2 cup)

Vegetables eaten raw or cooked to the crispy-tender stage have more fiber.

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.

How about 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 hot cereal, muffin or pancake batter, scrambled eggs, soups, casseroles or vegetable dishes. Use your imagination!

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 garden or housework, for example. 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 bowel activity

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.

Why is constipation a problem?

Constipation is uncomfortable.

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

Some potassium is lost through your bowel movement. Constipation can increase your potassium level.

Peritoneal dialysis patients will get less effective dialysis if their bowels do not moving 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 can cause a serious medical condition.

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