

CONSTIPATION



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Constipation occurs when an individual has three or less bowel movements in a week. It is dry and hardened stool that is not easily expelled out or an infrequency of stool. The frequency of bowel movements varies from person to person. In most situations, constipation does not last long and it is not a serious problem but there are certain situations that can be worrisome. It becomes worrisome if there is severe pain, blood in stools, or constipation that lasts more than three weeks.

There are some risk factors that may contribute to constipation and these include: being a woman; an older adult; inadequate intake of water; low fiber in diet; taking certain medications; and being less physically active.

The various causes of constipation include: being dehydrated; a diet low in fiber; insufficient physical activity; consuming too much milk or other dairy products; a change in routine; pregnancy; ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement; medications such as iron pills, calcium channel blockers, anticholinergics, antidepressants,

diuretics, anticonvulsants, opioids and antacids that contain aluminum and calcium. Constipation can also occur as a result of certain medical diseases and conditions. When there is a blockage in the rectum or colon, certain conditions such as rectal cancer, colon cancer, anal fissure, rectocele, bowel stricture and bowel obstruction may exist. There are some neurological problems that can cause constipation such as Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, stroke and autonomic neuropathy. Endocrine disorders for instance, diabetes, hypothyroidism, hypercalcemia and hyperparathyroidism can also be a reason for constipation. Systemic disorders such as scleroderma and lupus also cause constipation.

It is essential to visit a doctor when you have the following symptoms associated with constipation: blood in stool; bleeding from rectum; low back pain; nausea; loss of appetite; unable to pass gas; and severe pain in the abdomen. If you are experiencing chronic constipation, your doctor will perform a physical examination of the abdomen and a rectal examination. X-ray, blood tests and stool tests may be required and also if needed, procedures such as colonoscopy and/or sigmoidoscopy may be performed.

With chronic constipation many complications may arise such as hemorrhoids, which are swollen veins in the anus; impacted feces; anal fissure, which is a torn skin in the anus; and rectal prolapse, which occurs when the intestine protrudes from the anus. Straining to have a bowel movement leads to unfavorable conditions and can worsen the situation.

Constipation can be prevented by drinking lots of fluids; consuming high-fiber food; doing physical activities; consuming less dairy products; and not delaying to go to the washroom.

The treatment of constipation includes home remedies and some laxatives. Home remedies include drinking plenty of water; increasing fiber intake in your diet; drinking coffee; eating probiotic food such as yogurt; eating prunes; having prebiotic foods such as banana; magnesium citrate is also helpful; and reducing the intake of dairy products.

In most cases, constipation is not a serious matter but if you are experiencing worrisome symptoms and/or signs, it should not be ignored and immediate consultation should be taken.

References:

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