



# Keep those bowels moving

Bowel movements are an important way your body completes the process of digestion. Going regularly is a sign that everything is in good working order.

Constipation is common in our modern culture and can become more of a problem as we age. Promoting healthy bowel movements is a lifelong self-care measure that protects your bowels for your whole life.



## DEFINING CONSTIPATION

Everyone's bowel movement pattern is different. What may be normal for one person can be constipation for someone else. When evaluating your bowel movements, pay attention to patterns over time and how comfortable your bowels feel on a day-to-day basis.

In general, constipation is defined as:

- Having less than three bowel movements per week
- Dry, hard, or lumpy stools
- Difficulty passing stools or pain when going
- Feeling as though not all the stool has passed

## CAUSES

Constipation occurs when your bowels are slow to move stool through your intestines. This can happen for a variety of reasons, many of which are treatable. Some of the most common causes of constipation are lifestyle related and simple to address:

- Not drinking enough water
- Insufficient physical activity
- Lack of fiber in the diet
- Certain medications and supplements
- Changes in habits or routines, such as when traveling
- Medical conditions such as bowel disease or pelvic floor dysfunction

## KEEP BOWELS MOVING

The goal is for bowel movements to be regular, effortless, and comfortable.

- Drink plenty of water. Try using a water bottle to track how much you drink each day.
- Eat more fiber. Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should feature prominently in your diet. Aim for at least one serving of each at every meal.
- Avoid or limit high-fat processed foods, such as fast food, fried food, chips, and processed meats.
- Move more. Regular exercise doesn't just move your muscles. It helps your bowels move, too.

