



Constipation while pregnant

Sometimes pregnant women have trouble passing stool. That's called constipation. During pregnancy it can be caused by higher levels of progesterone, which slows down digestion. This helps the mother absorb more nutrients from her food.

Another cause of constipation is the growing uterus. It presses down on the colon, making it harder for waste to pass through.



SYMPTOMS

- Passing solid body waste less often
- Swollen belly
- Straining when passing solid body waste
- Hard stools
- Feeling full after passing solid body waste

CAUSES

- Higher progesterone levels
- Iron supplements
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not being active enough
- Not enough fiber in your diet
- Using laxatives over a long period of time
- Certain medicines. Examples: certain heart, pain, and anti-depressant medicines.
- Not going to the toilet when you have the urge to pass body waste
- Hemorrhoids
- Underactive thyroid gland

You can probably ease constipation by changing some of your habits. Do medicines or health problems seem to be the cause? If so, talk with your health care provider.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have any of these problems with the constipation?

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Severe pain in your belly, especially in the lower left part
- Bloating in your belly
- Weight loss
- Very thin, pencil-like stools (solid body waste)
- Bloody stools
- Nausea or vomiting
- No relief after using a laxative

NO

YES

▶ **CALL DOCTOR**



In the past, did you have constipation with a problem called “irritable bowel syndrome” (IBS)?

NO

YES

▶ **CALL DOCTOR**



Did the constipation happen after taking medicine or vitamins?

NO

YES

▶ **CALL DOCTOR**



Have you had problems from constipation in the past?

NO

YES

▶ **CALL DOCTOR**



Do you have constipation for more than 3 days?

NO

YES

▶ **CALL DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

- Every day, eat fiber-rich foods. Examples: bran, whole-grain breads and cereals, beans, lentils, fresh fruits, and vegetables. Fiber helps soften stools. Eat apples, raisins, and prunes. Drink prune juice. **{Note: Don't load up on high fiber foods all in one day if you are not used to eating them. Doing this can give you gas. It is better to add high fiber foods over several days.}**
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water and other liquids every day. Liquids help your system move things along.
- Do mild to moderate exercise. Do the ones your health care provider suggests.
- Don't take mineral oil.
- Go to the toilet when you get the urge. Don't wait.
- At the toilet, rest your feet on a footstool. This helps you keep from straining.
- Only take antacids like Tums if your health care provider tells you to. Antacids can be binding.
- Ask your health care provider about “bulk-forming” laxatives. Examples: Metamucil, Perdiem, Fiber Con. You can buy these without a prescription. Ask your provider about using one.
- Do not use “stimulant” laxatives unless your health care provider tells you to. Examples: Ex-Lax, Dulcolax, and castor oil. Certain laxatives don't let your body absorb vitamins right. And, strong laxatives can cause the uterus to contract. This could make labor start.
- Do not use enemas.