

# TIPS TO HELP WITH CONSTIPATION

It is an awkward topic to be sure but **constipation** is a very common concern for people with Multiple Sclerosis.



# Some tips to promote bowel health and regularity include:

## **Fiber**

Consuming fiber rich foods like colorful fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds can help to keep you regular. Introduce more fiber into your diet gradually and build on your intake over time. Fiber and water go hand in hand. If you are increasing your fiber intake, you should increase your water intake at the same time. A high fiber diet without enough fluid can make matters worse and contribute to constipation.

## **Foods Naturally High In Polyols like Sorbitol**

Foods that are naturally high in sorbitol can contribute to softer stools that pass more quickly through the intestinal tract. Try adding these into your diet but don't overdo it! Large quantities of these foods can cause diarrhea. Some high sorbitol foods are:

- Pears
- Peaches
- Apricots
- Plums
- Cherrys
- Apples

## **Stay Hydrated**

It is important to stay well hydrated. Chronic dehydration can contribute to constipation, joint pain, headaches, low energy and confusion.

## **Hot & Cold Beverages**

Try drinking a hot beverage followed by a glass of ice water to stimulate bowels. This may be most effective in the morning with breakfast.

## **Move Your Body, Move Your Bowels**

One of the key risk factors for constipation is inactivity. Regular exercise can normalize bowel function. Exercise can stimulate more efficient intestinal contractions to keep things moving along. Aim for 30-60 minutes of physical activity per day. You can break it down into smaller chunks of time to make it easier. Some physical activity is always better than none.

## **Get Regular With Your Routine**

Your body likes routine, so establish a regular time to empty your bowels. 20-30 minutes after a meal is often a good time to head to the bathroom. You may need to remind yourself to do this if you are not able to feel the sensation of needing to go.

## **Check Supplements and Medications**

Medicines, herbal remedies and dietary supplements may impact bowel function. This information may be available on the bottle or included in the paperwork that comes with most prescriptions. To determine if a medication or supplement could be the cause of your bowel symptoms, review your list of medicines with your healthcare provider.

## **Over The Counter Constipation Products**

These can be helpful but should be used in moderation; long-term use is not recommended. If you have not had a BM in 3 days, consult your MD.

