



Refresh and recharge
by taking a walk with your
best friend each day!

Side Effects - Constipation

Constipation is when you have infrequent bowel movements and stool that may be hard, dry and difficult to pass. You may also have stomach cramps, bloating and nausea when you are constipated. Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy can cause constipation. Certain medicines (such as pain medicines), changes in diet, not drinking enough fluids and being less active may also cause constipation. It is easier to prevent constipation than to treat its complications which may include fecal impaction or bowel obstruction.

Take these steps to prevent or treat constipation:

- **Eat high-fiber foods.** Ask your health care team how many grams of fiber you should have each day. If you have had an intestinal obstruction or intestinal surgery, you should not eat a high-fiber diet.
- **Drink plenty of liquids.** Drink at least 8 cups of liquid each day. You may need more based on your treatment and medications. Drinking warm or hot liquids may help.
- **Try to be active every day.** Most people can do light exercise, even in a bed or chair. Other people choose to walk or ride an exercise bike for 15-30 minutes each day.
- **Learn about medicine.** Use only medicines and treatments for constipation that are prescribed by your provider, since some may lead to bleeding, infection or other harmful side effects in people being treated for cancer. Keep a record of your bowel movements to share with your provider or nurse.

Talk with your health care team

- What problems should I call you about?
- What information should I keep track of and share with you? (For example, you may be asked to keep track of your bowel movements, meals and exercise.)
- How much liquid should I drink each day?
- What steps can I take to feel better?
- Would you refer me to a registered dietitian who can recommend helpful foods?
- Should I take medicine for constipation? If so, what medicine should I take or avoid?
