

# Fact Sheet

# Constipation

## Parkinson's Disease & Movement Disorders Center

Constipation has many causes; many can be controlled by diet, fluid intake and activity. Other causes are due to medications or medication side-effects. One issue that comes with Parkinson's disease is decreased gastric motility (the stomach and intestines do not move normally). This is due to the autonomic nervous system slowing down. This system is responsible for regulating smooth muscles. If the system is not working properly, then all other systems it works with will not work properly.

There are options available for Parkinson's disease patients. The options require change on the part of the patient and family members. As the body adapts, the changes will make a difference. But, remember, the changes will take some time, up to 3 to 4 weeks.

Be patient, and avoid trying to solve the problem with the use of laxatives and enemas. Such products can cause worse constipation and can damage the lining of the intestines. Laxatives and enemas should be used as a last resort, and should be discussed with your physician.

Here is what you can do to help *prevent* constipation:

- Drink 6 to 8 8oz glasses of water every day.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, as they can act as a diuretic.
- Increase daily fiber by eating more fruits and vegetables: 5 to 9 servings a day.
- Use bulking agents like Fibercon or Metamucil.
- Become more active. Increased activity also stimulates the intestines.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise helps your body and mind feel better.
- Move your bowels when you feel the urge.

If you are already dealing with constipation, here are some suggestions:

- Drink an additional 2 to 4 8oz. glasses of water.
- Try warm liquids, especially first thing in the morning.
- Add additional servings of fruits and vegetables to your diet.
- Eat prunes or bran cereal.
- Add a bulking agent like Fibercon or Metamucil.
- Exercise regularly.

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