

# Constipation

If you are experiencing constipation, you may want to follow these recommendations. When trying them, remember these are general suggestions and that, as individuals, what works well for one person may not necessarily work well for another person. As always, remember to keep your physician aware of any changes in your bowels in order to receive appropriate treatment.

## Try

- **Gradually increasing your fiber** (whole grain breads, FiberOne or other fiber cereals, bran muffins, psyllium—ground or whole in hot cereals, fresh and dried fruits with the skin on and cooked and raw vegetables with the skin on) Don't increase your fiber by more than 5 grams a day or you may experience some uncomfortable GI bloating, gas and pain.
- **Prune juice or prunes, raisins**
- **Dried beans and peas**
- **Kernel corn**
- **Popcorn**
- **Whole grain crackers**
- **Nuts and seeds**
- **Increasing fluids**
- **Increasing physical activity** (check with your doctor before making any drastic changes in your exercise routine) **Goal: walk 30 minutes a day or more every day.**
- **Drinking a warm beverage first thing in the morning or before going to bed at night** (this often stimulates bowel activity)

## Avoid

- **High fat foods**
- **Foods that bind** (such as rice, bananas, potatoes without the skin on and cheese)

The goal for daily fiber intake is 20 to 35 grams each day. Just remember, if you need a fiber boost, gradually increase the amount you consume. The bacteria in your stomach and intestines need time to adjust to change. Adding fiber too quickly—or consuming too much on a regular basis—may result in gas, diarrhea, cramps and bloating.

Along with extra fiber, drink plenty of safe water and other fluids, too. Fiber helps prevent constipation and related intestinal problems by acting like a large sponge in your colon. It holds water and keeps waste moving along. In order for fiber to do its job, you need to consume enough fluids. Aim for at least 8 cups of liquids a day. If you drink caffeinated beverages, you may need to increase your fluid intake to compensate.

There are fiber pills and powders available to buy, but they are expensive. Also many fiber pills contain only a small amount of fiber compared with the amount found in foods. High fiber over the counter supplements may inhibit the absorption of some minerals and medications.

## Blueberry Bran Flake Muffins

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour	1 1/2 cups bran flake cereal
1/4 cup sugar	1 cup skim milk
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 egg
1/4 teaspoon salt	1/4 cup vegetable oil
Vegetable cooking spray	1/2 cup frozen blueberries

1. Stir together flour, sugar, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
2. In large mixing bowl, combine cereal and milk. Let stand about 3 minutes or until cereal softens.
3. Add egg and oil, mix well. Add flour mixture, stirring only until combined. Stir in blueberries.
4. Portion batter evenly into twelve 2 1/2-inch muffin pan cups coated with cooking spray.
5. Bake at 400°F about 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Yield: 12 muffins; 150 calories per muffin; 5 grams fat; 1 gram saturated fat; 20 milligrams cholesterol; 2 grams fiber.