



**Self Care Forum**  
Helping people take care of themselves

## Fact sheet No. 5



## Easy Read

# Constipation



This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if you get constipation.

It also tells you when you should become concerned and see your doctor.



### **What is constipation?**

Constipation is when your stools (poo) become hard and you find it more difficult or painful to go to the toilet.



A **stool** is your poo.

Passing a **stool** means having a poo.



You may also have a feeling of being unable to completely empty your bowel.

Opening your bowels or having a poo may be more difficult because your stools are hard, lumpy and dry, or because they are abnormally small or large.



## **Other symptoms**

You may also feel bloated or sick.

You may not want to eat.

You may get aches or pain in your tummy.



## **How common is it?**

Constipation is very common especially in women and older people.



## What causes it?

- Not eating enough cereals, vegetables and fruit
- Changing what you eat and when you eat
- Not going to the toilet when you need to
- Not drinking enough liquid
- Not getting enough exercise
- Mental health problems such as depression or anxiety.
- Certain medicines may also cause you to become constipated



# What may happen?



We're all different – some of us pass stools only every three or four days.

Other people go more than once a day.



## **Constipation is usually harmless**

Being constipated once in a while is common and usually completely harmless.



In most cases, constipation lasts only a short time and settles within a few days.



There is usually no need for any tests.

# What can I do to help my child get better?



## **Healthy diet**

Eat more fruit, vegetables, seeds, pulses and cereals, or oats.

Drink plenty of water.



## **Exercise**

Try to exercise more, which helps your tummy digest food.



## **Listen to your body**

Respond to your bowel's natural pattern.

Do not delay going to the toilet when you feel the urge to go.



## **Pain relief**

Simple pain killers such as paracetamol can help to relieve pain.

## Medicines to ease constipation



There are many medicines you can buy at the pharmacy that will help with constipation.

Speak to your pharmacist for advice if you're not sure.

## When should I get medical help?



Go to your local doctor (GP) if you notice any of these:

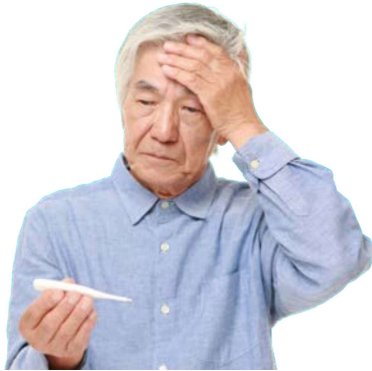
- Your constipation does not go away after 6 weeks
- Your tummy becomes swollen, or you start vomiting







- You're over 50 and have never suffered from constipation before
- You think that a medication makes you constipated
- You notice blood in your stools



- You've been losing weight for no reason. You also feel tired all the time, sweaty or feverish or that these symptoms don't go away after 4-6 weeks

## Where can I find out more?



### **NHS Choices**

**Web:** <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Constipation/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.

Easy read by [easy-read-online.co.uk](http://easy-read-online.co.uk)