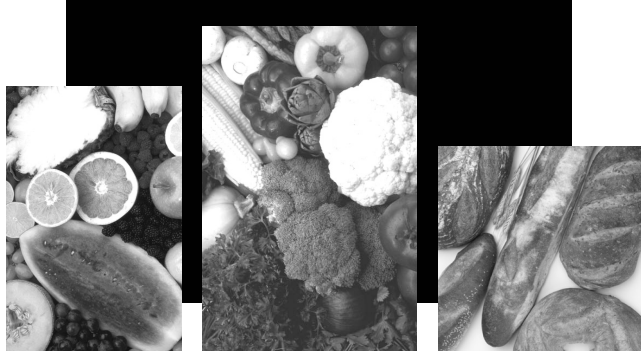

Patient Information

Nutrition Management of Constipation



Comments, Feedback?

Contact Patient and Professional Education
519-685-8742

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Reviewed by the LRCP Patient Education Committee
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Fig Jelly

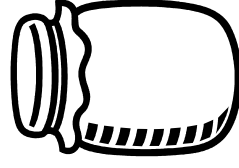
Ingredients:

- 10 dried figs
- ½ cup (125 mL) of grape jelly or any other flavour of jam
- ½ cup of boiling water

Directions:

- Chop figs as finely as possible and place in a small glass mixing bowl.
- Add boiling water, cover and soak for one hour.
- Transfer to a 1 cup plastic storage container.
- Add jelly and stir.
- Cover and refrigerate.
- Use as a spread on bread, toast, bagels, crackers etc.

Serving size: 2 Tbsp (30 mL)



Calories: 192
Fat: 0 g
Protein: 1 g
Fibre: 4 g

** Nutrient information is estimated based on information found in Health Canada's "Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods," Canadian Government Publishing, 1999.

Fibre Smoothie and Fig Jelly recipes were developed by James Mulligan, HBSc, Registered Dietitian, London Regional Cancer Program

What is Constipation?

Constipation is an incomplete bowel movement. It is also having less than three bowel movements per week. Constipation is caused when the large bowel absorbs too much water from the stool. The stool becomes hard and dry, making it difficult to pass.

If you think you have constipation, talk to your health care team. They can provide you with information on preventing, managing and relieving constipation. In severe cases, you may need medication to relieve the constipation.

You may have constipation when:

- The bowel movement is hard, dry, and "pellet-like";
- You have a feeling of an incomplete bowel movement;
- It is difficult to empty your bowels;
- You strain to move the bowel;
- You have pain when the bowel does move;
- You feel bloated and full;
- Your underwear is soiled with stool.

COLOSTOMY

If you have a **colostomy**, you may be constipated if you do not have a bowel movement for three days.

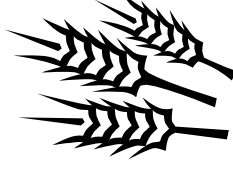
ILEOSTOMY

If you have an **ileostomy** you will **never** become constipated. However, if the stool in your ostomy pouch does become very firm or it is difficult to pass into the pouch you need to call your physician.

Why do I get constipated?

There are many reasons why you get constipated. A cancerous tumour can sometimes block the intestine, making it harder to pass waste. Some chemotherapy treatments cause constipation that can last for a few weeks, even when the treatments are finished. Other reasons might include:

- Medication for controlling pain, nausea, swelling, and high blood pressure;
- Vitamins or supplements that contain calcium and iron;
- Dehydration, or not drinking enough fluids;
- Lack of physical activity;
- Being bedridden or chair bound;
- Not having enough fibre in your diet;
- Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement;
- Overuse of laxatives;
- Changes in life style such as travelling;
- Life changes such as pregnancy or aging.



How can I prevent constipation?

Here are some helpful hints to help relieve or prevent constipation:

- Know your normal bowel movement habits. Remember that normal bowel habits vary;
- Eat a well-balanced diet that is high in fibre;
- Drink plenty of liquids during the day;
- Exercise regularly and go for walks;
- Do not avoid the urge to have a bowel movement;
- Set aside time after breakfast or dinner for undisturbed visits to the toilet.

Recipes

Fibre Smoothie

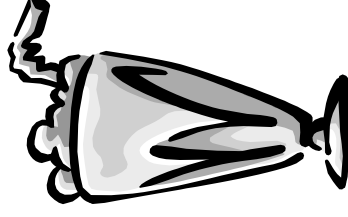
Ingredients:

- ½ cup (125 mL) of juice
- ½ cup (125 mL) of plain yogurt or silken tofu
- 1 rounded tsp. (5 mL) of Benefibre™ or Metamucil®

Directions:

- Pour juice and yogurt (or silken tofu) into the blender.
- Mix on high speed until smooth.
- Add Benefibre™ or Metamucil® and blend.
- Pour into a large glass and enjoy.

Serving size: 1 cup (250 mL)



Calories: 205
Fat: 2 g
Protein: 7 g
Fibre: 3-4 g

*Benefibre™ and Metamucil® can be found in drug stores or the pharmacy section of your grocery store.

- Indicate the type and amount of fluids and food you are eating;
- Write the names and amount of medicines you are taking for your bowels;
- Identify any new medications or treatments you have had since your last visit;
- Identify any changes to your health.

When do I need to call for help?

During regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), call the telephone triage nurse at the London Regional Cancer Program at 519-685-8600 and press option '3' if you have:

- No bowel movements for three days;
- A bloated abdomen;
- Pain in your abdomen;
- Nausea and vomiting;
- Blood in your stool.

If calling **after hours** or on weekends, call 519-685-8600 and press option '2' to reach the on-call oncologist. You may also see your family doctor. If you live outside of London, go to your local emergency department.

Contact the LRCP Dietitian or a member of your health care team when you notice a change in your bowel movement habits.

How can I manage constipation?

If you are not already using laxatives or stool softeners, talk to your oncologist. Besides medications, the most effective way to manage constipation is to increase your fibre intake. It is important to include some fibre with every meal and snack. Depending on your age and gender, you may need between 21g and 38 g of fibre each day (see chart below).

Age ↗	19 - 30	31 - 50	51 - 70	70 +
Male	38	38	30	30
Female	25	25	21	21

Health Canada Fibre Recommendations (grams/day)

How can I increase my fibre intake?

Make sure you increase your fibre intake gradually to reduce bloating and gas. You will also need to drink more fluids:

- Sprinkle All Bran® or All Bran Buds® (1-2 tablespoons), wheat bran (1-2 teaspoons) or psyllium husk (1-2 teaspoons) into pudding, yogurt, oatmeal, applesauce, or on top of your favourite cold cereal. Add to casseroles, soups, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, baked goods, etc.
- Add 1 rounded teaspoon of Metamucil® or Benefibre™ to beverages.
- Cut up some fresh fruit to put on your breakfast cereal, or have it for a snack.
- Include one to two vegetables with meals and snacks.

Helpful hints to manage constipation

If the constipation is severe:

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks;
- Avoid skipping meals. Eat meals and snacks at regular times each day;
- Try 20 minutes of moderate activity after eating a meal;
- Include foods that are natural laxatives like prunes, prune juice, rhubarb and papaya;
- Limit fast food, processed foods, high fat foods, and large servings of meat or cheese.

Fluids to Choose

Plenty of water, prune juice, fruit juices with pulp, hot beverages (decaf coffee, herbal tea, broth, soup).

Caffeinated products help move the bowels but can also lead to dehydration. Water is always a better choice!

How can I help my health care team diagnose constipation?

Your health care team needs to know detailed information when treating any cancer related symptoms. You can help them by keeping a record of your bowel habits. This

important information provides clues and allows them to quickly treat constipation. If you think you are having problems with constipation, write down the following information:

- Date of your last bowel movement;
- Indicate size, colour, and firmness;



	Foods to <u>Choose</u>	Foods to <u>Limit</u>
BREADS	Whole grain/multigrain breads, rye, pumpernickel. High fibre cereals (e.g., All Bran®, Grape Nuts®, Shredded Wheat®, Red River®). Whole grain (WG) crackers, WG pasta, WG pancakes, WG waffles and WG bagels. Brown rice, wild rice, corn meal, barley.	White bread, pastries, cakes, doughnuts. Low fibre cereals (e.g., Rice Krispies, Special K®, Corn Flakes, Alpha-Bits®), white crackers, white pasta, pancakes and waffles made with white flour, white bagels and white rice.
FRUITS	Berries, pears, plums, apricots, apples with the skin, prunes, figs, raisins, dates, rhubarb.	Do not limit.
VEGGIES	Broccoli, brussels sprouts, asparagus, cabbage, corn, peas, spinach, tomatoes, potato (with skin).	Do not limit.
PROTEIN	Any legumes like kidney beans, navy beans, chickpeas, lentils, etc., peanuts with the skin, walnuts, almonds	Do not limit.
MEATS	Fish filets, skinless chicken or turkey, lean pork, lean beef.	Bacon, sausage, fast food burgers (including beef, chicken and fish), chicken fingers, chicken wings, fish sticks, fatty cuts of beef, pork or lamb.
SNACKS	Popcorn, trail mix (with dried fruit), tortilla chips, banana chips, Fig Newtons®, oatmeal raisin cookies, date squares.	High fat/low fibre foods (e.g., potato chips, cookies, doughnuts, pastries, etc.).