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ABOUT CONSTIPATION

Constipation is defined as the difficult passage and infrequent (fewer than three) bowel movements per week. Constipation is another possible cause of bladder control problems. When the rectum is full of stool, it may disturb the bladder and cause incontinence or the sensation of urgency and frequency. Because constipation may be caused by medications you are taking for other conditions, changes in bowel habits should always be reported to your physician. If you have a history of constipation or have recently become constipated discuss this with your physician.

Constipation may be the result of several different factors including:

- Limited fluid intake
- Laxative abuse
- Imbalances in the diet (too much sugar and animal fat)
- Medications, particularly pain medicines, antidepressants, iron supplements and tranquilizers
- Neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, stroke, multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injuries

Most people in Western society need more bulk in their diet in the form of high fibers, fiber additives or other bulking agents sold at drug stores. You should discuss your fiber needs with your physician, pharmacist or nutritionist. Typical dietary recommendations for fiber are between 25-35 grams per day. When adding fiber to your diet it is important to remember to drink plenty of fluids.

This recipe is commonly suggested to promote regular bowel function by increasing dietary fiber. You may experience a bloated feeling and have gas when adding fiber to your diet but this should pass within a few weeks. It is important to avoid regular use of laxatives and enemas as they decrease the bowel's ability to function.

RECIPE FOR BOWEL REGULARITY

Mix together:

- 1 cup applesauce
- 1 cup oat bran or unprocessed wheat bran
- 3/4 cup prune juice

Begin with 1-2 Tbs. each evening mixed with or followed by one 6-8 oz cup of water or juice. This should help to soften and regulate your bowel movements within 2 weeks. If no change occurs, slowly increase serving to 3-4 Tbs.

This may be stored in your refrigerator or your freezer. One to two tablespoon servings may be frozen in sectioned ice cube trays or in foam plastic egg cartons and thawed as needed.