



## Constipation

### What is constipation?

Bowel motion frequency varies from person to person and what is normal for one person may not be normal for another. Constipation is diagnosed when bowel movements occur less than is normal or less than three times per week. Bowel motions, when they do occur, may consist of small amounts of hard stool that are difficult to pass. Constipation may be accompanied by feelings of bloatedness, abdominal pain and a swollen abdomen.

Constipation is a common medical condition and can usually be resolved with dietary changes and exercise. However, if constipation is accompanied by blood or mucus in the stools, fever, or continues for more than one week, you should contact your GP for advice. Chronic constipation may lead to haemorrhoids, faecal impaction and anal fissures (a tear in the anal canal, which can cause pain on defecation). Stool softeners and manual evacuation may be required to move the hardened stool.

### What causes constipation?

The usual cause of constipation is a low fibre diet, inadequate intake of fluids and lack of exercise. Constipation can also be a side effect of:

- Drugs, including opiates such as morphine, tricyclic antidepressants;
- Iron supplements;
- Pregnancy.

### How is constipation treated?

For mild constipation a change in diet and fluid intake is all that is required to restore bowel habits to normal, to discuss this in more detail contact the **Bon Secours Dietetic department on 01- 8065488**

Where constipation is associated with the passage of blood or mucus or if there is a change in bowel habit with alternating diarrhoea, your GP / consultant may want to carry out further investigations.

If a specific cause of constipation is identified this will be treated appropriately. If no medical cause for Constipation is found, then you should be referred to the dietetic department for dietary advice.

**Bon Secours Dietetic Department: Tel 01-8065488**  
**Email: [nutrition@dublin.bonsecours.ie](mailto:nutrition@dublin.bonsecours.ie)**