



SAY HELLO TO A HEALTHY GUT

Most cases of constipation can be resolved naturally or with modest intervention and 'natural remedies' like a high fibre intake

By Anjali Varma

More often than not, you may find yourself in a tight spot with your bowel movements.

This has a lot to do with poor lifestyle choices like lack of exercise, a low-fibre diet, not drinking enough fluids and eating junk food. Changes to your normal routine

can also cause problems with your digestive system, resulting in constipation. These could be due to sporadic access to toilets and changes in your diet.

Did you know that a recent study revealed a startling fact? twenty five per cent of Indians in the age group of 40 to 65 suffer from constipation (*Prevalence of Constipation among the General Population: a Community Based Survey from India*).

Almost everyone experiences constipation at a certain point in their life. Constipation happens when the colon absorbs too much water. This can occur if the muscles in the colon are contracting very gradually or poorly, causing the stool to move too slowly and lose more water.

FAST FACTS ON CONSTIPATION

- Constipation generally occurs because too much water is absorbed from food
- Causes of constipation include physical inactivity, certain medications and aging
- Some cases of constipation can be relieved by lifestyle changes

Most cases of constipation can be resolved naturally or with modest intervention like a high fibre intake; increase in the consumption of hydrating liquids; lifestyle changes such as increased physical activity and regular exercise. Physical movement not only works the muscles but it also stimulates the natural contraction of the intestines, helping to move stool through the system quickly and effectively. You could also use 'natural remedies' to relieve constipation. In fact, many over-the-counter laxatives contain herbal ingredients. These laxatives work by drawing fluid in to the colon and increasing the contraction of the intestines.

'Natural remedies' could also be a combination of active ingredients like *isabgol*, *amaltas*, *sonamukhi*, *harad*, *mulethi*, *saunf*,

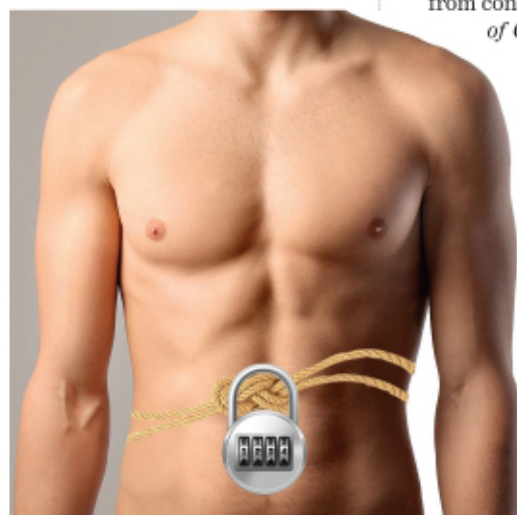
etc., which are some of the most common home cures or solutions. These dissolve or swell in the intestines, lubricate the stool and make its passage easier and more regular. Other things include drinking two to four extra glasses of water a day, unless your doctor has told you to limit fluids for other reasons. You could also try drinking warm liquids, especially in the morning; adding fruits and vegetables to your diet; eating prunes and bran cereal and using a natural laxative if required.

Laxatives containing natural actives increase intestinal secretions that prevent the hardening of the stool. They also help in clearing the bowel. While choosing a laxative look for a high fibre variety.

Physically active people are much less likely to become constipated compared to those who are inactive. And finally, constipation can be uncomfortable to talk about, but even more uncomfortable to deal with. So it is wise to watch your daily habits and your lifestyle to keep constipation at bay.

Ultimately, a healthy body means healthy digestion and a healthy gut means a healthy mind.

Source: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov



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