

constipation

Constipation refers to infrequent or painful bowel movements caused when waste material moves too slowly through the large bowel. It is a symptom that has different meanings to every individual. Constipation can also mean a decrease in the volume or weight of the stool, the need to strain to have a movement, a feeling of incomplete evacuation, or the need to use enemas, suppositories or laxatives to maintain regularity.

About 80% of people will suffer from constipation at some point in their lives, and periods of brief constipation are quite normal. Constipation can be diagnosed if there are fewer than three bowel movements in a week on an ongoing basis.

The common understanding that everyone must have a bowel movement every day is something that has contributed to overuse and abuse of laxatives. Although, in saying this, the colon is a holding space for waste matter and this waste should ideally be moved within 18-24hours, so that the development of harmful toxins can be avoided.

A normal bowel movement is hard to define; as for some it may be three times a day to three times a week. For others they may go a week or more without experiencing discomfort or harmful effects. Whatever is normal for an individual can be affected by diet.

Causes

Consuming less than the required amount of fibre and fluid will affect the proper function of the colon, resulting in constipation. Other factors such as, inadequate exercise, muscle disorders, bowel diseases, heavy consumption of junk food, and advanced age (often associated with dehydration) can all be causes of constipation. Some metabolic disturbances such as high levels of calcium and low levels of thyroid

hormone, along with those who suffer kidney failure or diabetes can be the cause of constipation in some individuals. Interestingly depression can be a causative factor of constipation in people of any age.

Constipation can also be aggravated by travel, pregnancy or sudden changes in diet, or simply ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement on a regular basis. In some people medications including painkillers, antidepressants, blood pressure medications, diuretics, iron and calcium supplements can cause or worsen constipation.

If an individual notices any persistent changes in bowel habits, such as an increase or decrease in the frequency or size of a stool, and increase in the difficulty of passing a bowel motion, it definitely warrants the individual seeking medical advice. As there are many causes it is important they see a medical professional so that they may properly address the issue.

Symptoms

Constipation can lead to many different ailments and conditions. This emphasises the need for it to be addressed in the early stages. Some symptoms that may arise are: bad breath, bloatedness, body odour, coated tongue, depression, diverticulitis, fatigue, gas, headaches, haemorrhoids, hernia, indigestion, insomnia, varicose veins, malabsorption syndrome, and obesity. Furthermore it may even be involved in the development of bowel cancer.

Treatment

Treating constipation can be addressed by firstly looking at an individual's diet. Increasing fruit and vegetables on a regular basis, along with increased fluids can help most people. Including fibre supplements such as psyllium is useful as it provides not only relief to constipation, but also many other benefits such as helping to lower cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of developing colon polyps and cancer.

For a client following the SureSlim Quick Loss Program, most clients will find that with the addition of the seeds and the oil to their diet, their problem with constipation actually improves.

However, if your client continues to have a problem with constipation you can suggest the following:

1. The first thing to do with a constipated client is check that they really are having all their seeds and all their water. If they are, suggest they add lots of free vegetables to their daily meals.

2. If this is not effective within the next day or two recommend psyllium (**Metamucil**). This is to increase the fibre. Add a dessertspoon of psyllium and 1 teaspoon of slippery elm powder in a large glass of warm water once a day (adjust amount to suit the client). Follow with an additional glass of water.

3. If this does not work within 3 days you may recommend a herbal laxative that will gently but surely stimulate the bowel to move. Suggest the client uses **Natural Factors Laxative** (or alternatively **Natural Factors Ultra Lax** – according to directions on bottle). These products are effective in cases of stubborn constipation, but also soothing to the intestinal tract. Natural Factors Laxative should be recommended to be taken at suggested dosage, and adjusted upwards by an additional quarter of a tablet each 12 hours, until required result achieved. Use in conjunction with a teaspoon psyllium in large glass of warm water 2 x daily.

Please Note – Herbal laxatives are not recommended for long-term usage. If this problem persists longer than a week or two the client *MUST* be referred to their medical practitioner for advice.

References:

<http://www.naturalfactors.com>

<http://www.netritionals.com/ne00128.html>

<http://www.facrs.org>