



<https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk>

ALTERED BOWEL HABIT

Changes in bowel habit and stools can arise as a result of disease, be a side effect of treatment (even some months after treatment has finished) or arise as a result of an infection.

If you are constipated try to:

- Eat regular meals
- Eat foods rich in fibre such as whole-wheat breakfast cereals, oat based breakfast cereals with added nuts, seeds and dried fruit, wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta, brown rice, fresh fruit and vegetables
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. (Note: If you increase your fibre intake you need to ensure you are drinking lots of fluid, or your constipation may get worse. All fluids count: soups, tea, coffee, milk, juice, squash, water etc.)
- Try taking a small glass of prune juice or fig syrup, or up to 5 'ready-to-eat' dried prunes or apricots
- Consider adding some linseed (ground or seeds) to soups, salads, mix into cereal or yogurt. Start with one dessertspoonful a day and build up to two dessertspoonfuls a day after 3 days
- Gentle exercise and pelvic floor exercises can also help bowel function



If you have diarrhoea:

- Drink plenty of fluid each day to replace what you are losing but avoid or minimise alcohol and caffeinated drinks
- Eat small, frequent light meals made with easy to digest foods such as white fish, poultry, low fat dairy produce, well cooked eggs, white bread, pasta, rice
- Some people find reducing the fibre in their diet e.g. switching from wholegrain bread to white bread and from wholegrain cereals to lower fibre cereals such as cornflakes or Rice Krisipes can help. Others find taking softer forms of fibre e.g. porridge rather than Weetabix or stewed fruit rather than fresh, is helpful. Seek further advice from a dietitian
- Be aware that fatty foods and spicy foods may make diarrhoea worse
- Eat your meals slowly

If the symptoms are severe or do not settle within a few days consider speaking to a dietitian or your healthcare team