



## NUTRITION KEYNOTES

# Diet for Relief of Constipation

*Goal: To promote regular bowel movements.*

### General Fiber Content of Foods

Food	Grams
Meat, dairy, fats	0
Fruits (1 cup)	4–8
Vegetables (1 cup)	4–8
Whole-grain breads	2–6
Cooked grains (quinoa, bulgur) (½ cup)	4–5
Oatmeal (½ cup)	3
Bran cereals (½ cup)	8
Beans and peas (1 cup)	14–19
Nuts and seeds (1 ounce)	1–8
Flaxseeds (1 tablespoon)	2

Read labels on food packages for grams of fiber. Gradually work up to 25 to 35 grams a day.

### Eat More High-Fiber Foods

Choose whole foods with little or no processing. Add slowly to prevent gas, bloating, or diarrhea.

- **Beans, peas, and lentils:** Split pea, bean, or lentil soup; bean burritos; chili with beans; kidney, pinto, black, garbanzo, or other beans.
- **Fruits and vegetables (at least 8 servings a day):** Raw fruits with skin, dried fruits, raw vegetables, baked potatoes or yams with skin, cooked prunes or apricots.
- **Breads and cereals (at least 6 servings a day):** Whole-grain breads, high-fiber cereals (All Bran, Fiber One, shredded wheat, oatmeal), brown rice, bulgur, barley, quinoa, whole-grain pasta.
- **Nuts and seeds:** Chia seeds, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds, almonds, pistachios.

### Drink Plenty of Liquids

- Drink at least 8 to 10 eight-ounce cups of water or other liquid every day.
- Other liquids include juice (including warm prune juice), soup, milk, tea, or coffee.

### Exercise Regularly

Take a brisk walk or do an activity you enjoy, such as swimming, dancing, or bicycling. Try to get 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

### Additional Tips

- It's best to get your fiber from whole, unprocessed foods.
- Try unprocessed bran or psyllium husk (no more than 3 to 4 tablespoons a day). Start with a small amount (1 teaspoon) and increase each day until you get the desired results. Add to cereal, juice, soup, casseroles, and applesauce.
- Fiber supplements (such as Metamucil, Benefiber, Konsyl, FiberCon, and Citrucel) can also regulate bowel movements. **Be sure to follow instructions and drink plenty of liquids.**
- If eating beans or vegetables increases gas, try Beano, a product added to food before eating to reduce gas. It is available in drugstores.
- Discuss laxative use, including herbal or natural laxatives, with your doctor or other health care professional before using.

For more information, please contact your registered dietitian or local Center for Healthy Living ([kp.org/centerforhealthyliving](http://kp.org/centerforhealthyliving)).