

CONSTIPATION

WHAT IS IT?

Difficulty having a bowel movement. This can mean having fewer than optimal and/or painful, hard, or incomplete bowel movements. Constipation looks different for everyone based on what “normal” is for you. Normal bowel movement frequency can range from 3 times per day to 3 times per week.

Occasional constipation is quite common, and it is normal to experience some constipation during certain stages of life, such as childhood and pregnancy. It also may arise as the result of various lifestyle factors or medical conditions.

GENTLE NUTRITION SUGGESTIONS

Follow as you are able.

- Eat enough food for your body. Having regular bowel movements requires a regular and adequate intake of food!
- Include some foods that contain fiber. Fiber is the non-digestible part of plant foods that helps increase stool bulk and promotes the movement of material through the digestive tract. There are two types of fiber, soluble and insoluble, which both aid in digestion. Fiber is found in foods like whole grains, beans, fruit, vegetables, nuts and seeds
- Start slow when increasing fiber intake. It can take some time for the body to adjust
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially if increasing fiber, to help move food through the digestive tract. Warm fluids like tea or coffee can help initiate a bowel movement
- Prune juice can be helpful for relieving constipation. Try 4 oz per day as needed

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take the time to have a bowel movement. Resisting the urge to have a bowel movement or not allowing yourself enough time to have a bowel movement can increase constipation
- Practice relaxation techniques. Anxiety and stress can impact digestion because of the connection between our brain and gut
- Move your body in ways that feel good to you. Movement can help move food through the digestive tract

*Do not engage in any of these suggestions if they are harmful to other aspects of your health.

REMEMBER

We are imperfect beings and each day is new and different. Some days it may be easier to follow the suggestions than others. Be gentle with yourself.

GOAL

Self-compassion and kindness towards your body.

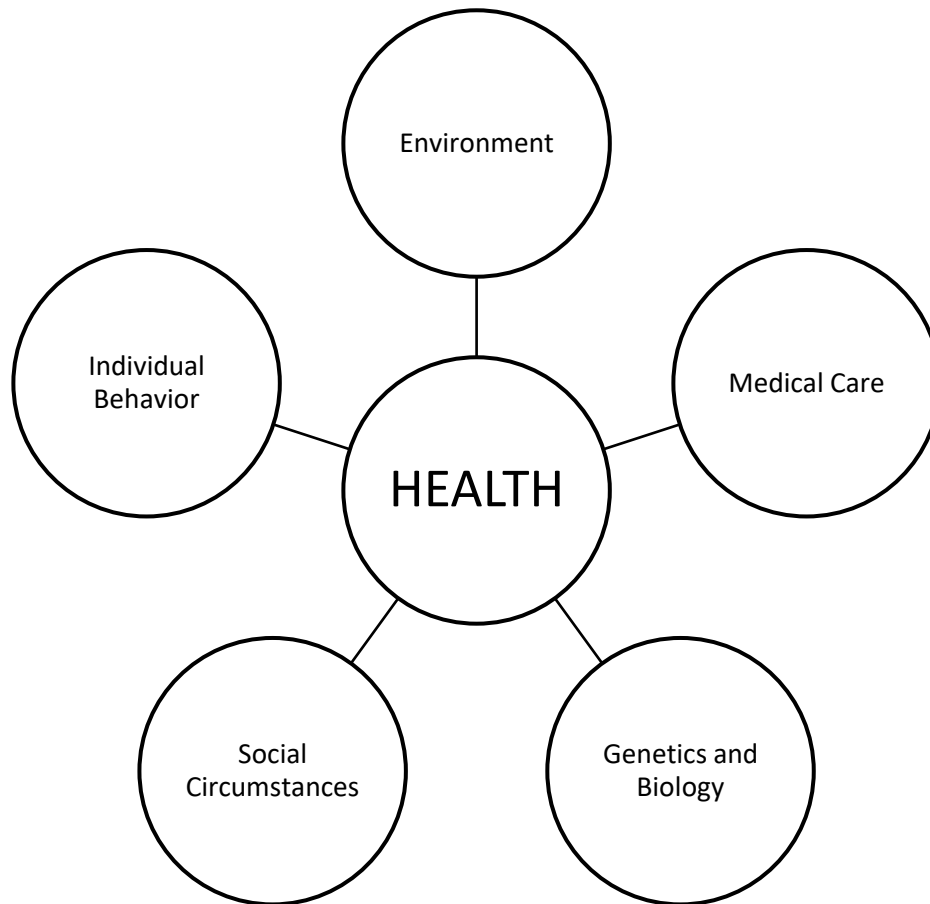
EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT

There are a spectrum of symptoms and reactions. If any food or movement recommendations do not feel right for your body, trust that! It may be helpful to talk more about this with your dietitian.

TOTAL HEALTH

Health is complex and is influenced by many factors. Not all factors are within your control.

It is important to consider all these factors, not just individual behaviors, when exploring ways to address your health.



REMINDER:

This health condition is not your fault!

Discuss causes and risk factors with your doctor or registered dietitian if you are interested.

Image Description: A series of circles with Health labeled in the center circle. There are five additional circles surrounding the center circle each one connected to the center with a line. The surrounding circles are labeled: Environment, Medical Care, Genetics and Biology, Social Circumstances, and Individual Behavior.

REFERENCES

Mahan KL, Raymond JL. Krause's Food and The Nutrition Care Process, 14th Ed. St Louis, MO: Elsevier; 2017.

Constipation: Overview. Mayo Clinic Website. January 2018. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseasesconditions/constipation/symptoms-causes/syc-20354253>, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20354259>. Accessed February 2019.

DISCLAIMERS

Handout created by Emily Izer, Bastyr University Dietetic Intern and reviewed by Meghan Cichy, Registered Dietitian. Template design by Elisabeth Kelsey, Bastyr Dietetic Intern.

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