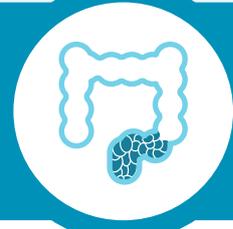


Constipation



This is a reduced frequency in bowel movements compared to what is normal for that person and is often accompanied with straining to pass small hard stools. Sometimes it can be a side effect of prescribed medications.

Symptoms include:

- Fewer bowel movements
- Straining to go to the toilet
- Hard or small stools
- Bloating
- Stomach cramps

Red flag symptoms

- New or worsening constipation without an adequate explanation
- Blood in the stools which is often seen as black/tarry stools
- Unintentional weight loss
- Nausea and vomiting

Self-care advice

- Drink plenty of fluid (about two litres a day). Avoid too many drinks containing caffeine as this can worsen constipation.
- Eat food rich in fibre such as fruit, vegetables and wholegrain cereals. Powdered bran is an easy way of introducing extra fibre into the diet as it is tasteless; although some people may not like the texture.
- Take regular exercise, e.g. walking, gardening and swimming, as a lack of activity can cause constipation.
- Don't delay in going to the toilet when you have the urge
- Short term use of a suitable laxative

Onward referrals

- A suggestion of faecal impaction would need to be referred, this is often experienced as colicky pain, swollen abdomen and unexpected severe diarrhoea.

Signposting

- Pharmacy First Scotland – Laxatives
- Common Ailment Service Wales – Laxatives

The information provided is correct at the time of publication, any information provided should be under the supervision of the Responsible Pharmacist. We hold no responsibility for any decisions made using this information.

Sept 2024 Version 1