



What is Constipation?

Constipation is a change to your normal bowel routine, meaning when you go to the toilet less frequently than you normally would. We understand that this can be an embarrassing subject to discuss, but left untreated, it can cause multiple unpleasant symptoms.

What are the signs of Constipation?

- A change in the frequency of your bowel motions
- Not passing stools (sometimes called faeces, and pronounced fee'seez) as often as you normally do
- Having to strain more than usual
- Pain when passing a bowel motion
- Inability to completely empty your bowel

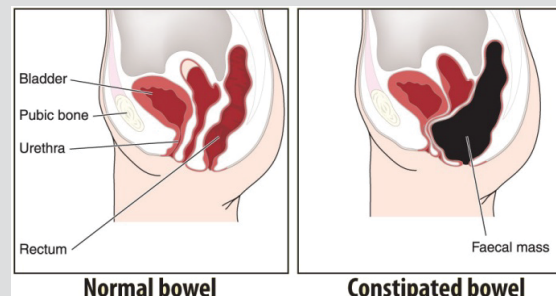
N.B. If you are constipated, stools can be hard, lumpy, watery, large or small

Common causes of Constipation

- Poor food intake
- Poor fluid intake
- Medications
- Lack of exercise and mobility
- Disease / malignancy
- Dehydration due to vomiting or fever
- Chemical imbalances in the blood e.g. too much calcium

Common misconceptions

- ✗ I am not eating much so the bowel will not be working.
False: The body produces faeces even if we are not eating as they are partly made up of internal waste products that occur naturally, as well as the residue of what we eat.
- ✗ I don't need to take medicine to make my bowels work as I eat a lot of fruit and fibre in my diet.
False: This is particularly important if you are taking any medication that contains morphine or other opiates.
- ✗ I won't be able to take my painkillers.
False.



What are the symptoms of Constipation?

- Feeling sickly (nausea) or vomiting
- Stomach ache or cramps
- Feeling bloated
- No appetite
- Difficulty passing urine
- Diarrhoea from overflow (watery stools bypassing a hard lump)
- Pressure in the back passage
- Confusion or restlessness

Constipation is treatable Do not ignore it

To diagnose and treat constipation, the nurse or doctor will need to know:

- Your bowel history: what is normal for you / when was your last normal bowel motion?
- Frequency: how many times your bowel moved in the past 24hrs
- Type of stool: are stools hard, lumpy, watery, large or small?
- Stool colour: brown, black, bloodstained, pale, mucus - covered
- Is there pain / discomfort when passing the bowel motion?
- Do you feel the bowel motion was complete?
- Do you have any of the symptoms listed?