

Constipation

[Constipation](#) is when you are not able to open your bowels (poo) as regularly as you normally do. Your stools (poo) become harder and you may need to strain to move your bowels.

Constipation can be caused by:

- a lack of fibre in your diet
- not drinking enough fluids
- not being active
- some medicines – such as the painkillers morphine and codeine.

Everyone's normal bowel pattern is different. But as a general guide, you should let your doctor or nurse know if you have not had a bowel movement for 3 days, unless this is normal for you. They can give you advice and treatment.

Tips for managing constipation

- Eat plenty of fibre each day. Good sources of fibre include: whole-wheat breakfast cereals (Weetabix®, Shredded Wheat® or muesli), wholemeal bread, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, and fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids – both hot and cold drinks will help. Aim to drink at least 2 litres (3½ pints) a day. This is very important if you increase the amount of fibre in your diet. Eating fibre without drinking enough fluids can make constipation worse.
- You could try a natural remedy for constipation – such as prune juice, prunes, fig syrup or dried apricots.
- [Gentle exercise](#), such as walking, will help keep your bowels moving.
- If you are constipated because of the medicines you are taking, it may be possible to change the dose you take. Talk to your doctor about this.
- You may need to take laxatives (medicines that help you empty your bowels). Your doctor can give you more advice.
- If you have [cancer of the bowel](#), or you think your cancer treatment is causing constipation, ask your doctor or specialist nurse for advice.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Healthy eating and cancer](#)
- [Healthy eating and cancer audiobook](#)
- [Managing the symptoms of cancer](#)
- [Eating problems and cancer](#)
- [Eating problems and cancer audiobook](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- Bladder & Bowel Community – visit www.bladderandbowel.org

Notes and questions
