

NUTRITION SNACKS CONSTIPATION

Constipation refers to abnormally infrequent bowel motions that are painful or difficult to pass. Constipation may also be accompanied by stomach bloating, stomach pain, nausea and loss of appetite. Feeling constipated can be a common symptom for new members and addressing this issue can save a member ongoing discomfort whilst following the program.

It is important to note that everybody has different bowel habits and discussing any changes or discomfort in bowel habits can help to determine if a member is constipated. If a member is opening their bowels every second or third day, that can be considered normal if that's part of their regular routine, however if this has changed from a daily habit, this could be a sign that they are constipated.

WHAT CAUSES CONSTIPATION?

Constipation can occur due to various diet and lifestyle reasons including:

- Low fluid intake.
- Low intake of dietary fibre.
- A sudden, significant increase in fibre intake.
- Low levels of physical activity.
- Certain medications and supplements.

Certain people are also more prone to getting constipated. This includes those with neurological and muscular problems in the digestive tract and those with conditions that affect hormones. Constipation also commonly affects the elderly, females, and those who have a mental health condition.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISCUSS CONSTIPATION WITH MEMBERS

While discussing constipation with your member may be uncomfortable, it is important to talk about a member's bowel habits to ensure they aren't feeling discomfort whilst following the program. If your member mentions words like cramping, feeling bloated or feeling nauseas, these could be signals that they are feeling constipated.

Constipation may also have an effect on a member's success as constipation and bloating can impact the scales and show that a member hasn't lost weight, thereby impacting motivation. It can also lead members to feel unwell which can also reduce motivation.

RED FLAGS

If your member discusses the following symptoms, please contact the dietitians for further advice:

- Sudden constipation with cramping and the inability to pass gas or defecate at all.
- When dietary/lifestyle changes haven't had an effect.
- Blood in the stool.
- Severe weight loss.
- Constipation for more than 2 weeks.
- Or if the size, shape and consistency of stools have changed.

TIPS TO MANAGE CONSTIPATION

Simple tips to overcome constipation include:

1. Include plenty of high fibre foods. Boost the fibre by keeping the skins on fruits and veggies and choose wholegrain foods like wholegrain bread for grain serves. And if they're adding meat serves, suggest including legumes like chickpeas or beans.
2. Use prunes as a fruit serve. 3 prunes = 1 Fruit serve.
3. Drink plenty of water.
4. Include exercise regularly or be as active as possible.
5. Keep a regular toilet routine and avoid holding it in if possible.
6. Add 1 tbsp of psyllium or oat bran as a Limited Free Food to increase fibre.

KEY MESSAGES

- 1 Constipation refers to abnormally infrequent bowel movements and may include pain or difficulty when passing stools.
- 2 Check in on your members bowel habits and look for red flags.
- 3 Help members overcome or avoid constipation by looking for higher fibre foods on their menu.
- 4 Encourage members to drink plenty of water and keep moving.