

## Kidney disease and constipation

This resource provides information on managing constipation for people with kidney disease. Constipation is a common problem for people with kidney disease. You should aim for a soft bowel movement that is easy to pass on most days. Common causes of constipation include not enough fibre, fluid or physical activity, some medications, or a slow-moving digestive system.

Constipation can increase your blood potassium levels - as slower digestion means more time for potassium to be absorbed. Constipation can also cause complications for people that use peritoneal dialysis. If you have constipation, it is important that you tell your Doctor, Nurse or Dietitian.

### Fibre in food

Eating more fibre can help prevent constipation. Fruit and vegetables, lentils and pulses and wholegrain foods, including wholemeal or multigrain breads or crackers, wholemeal pasta, brown rice, oats, bran and wholegrain breakfast cereals are the best sources of fibre. High fibre foods can be high in phosphate and potassium, but it is not well absorbed in the body.

### Strategies to increase fibre

- Include fibre rich foods at each meal
- Choose wholegrain and high fibre cereals e.g. rolled oats (porridge), semolina, *Weet-Bix*, *Vita Brits*, puffed or shredded wheat, bran flakes
- Choose wholegrain and wholemeal foods such as brown rice, rice and quinoa mixes, wholemeal flour, wholemeal pasta, wholemeal, multigrain or hi-fibre white breads
- Include lentils and tinned pulses (chickpeas, kidney beans, cannellini beans). Add to dishes such as stews, soups, casseroles, stir-fries and mince.
- Add nuts or seeds to salads or yoghurt e.g. pepitas, sunflower seeds, chia seeds
- Choose high fibre snacks e.g. fruit, vegetables, salt-reduced baked beans, popcorn, un-salted nuts and seeds, wholegrain crackers with natural hummus, high fibre muesli bars

- Have 2 pieces of fruit each day such as pears, apples, mandarins, strawberries and blueberries. You can include a small portion of dried fruit as 1 “piece” of fruit – 2 dried apricots, or 2 prunes. Choose whole fruit rather than fruit juice as fruit juice has limited fibre
- Have 5 serves of vegetables each day including green beans, peas, corn, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, cabbage, cucumber, lettuce, fresh tomato, spring onions and celery.

## Water

Drink a glass of fluid with every meal. If you are on a fluid restriction do not drink more than your daily allowance. If you are unsure of your fluid restriction talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian.

## Fibre supplements

If you aren't getting enough fibre from your food, a fibre supplement may help. Start fibre supplements in **small** amounts and build up slowly. Fibre supplements include:

- *Psyllium husks*: sprinkle 1 to 2 teaspoons onto breakfast cereal or mix into stews, yoghurt or in 250mL of water\*.
- *Metamucil*: refer to package for mixing instructions\*
- *Benefiber*: Add to water or sprinkle onto cereal or mix into moist foods as per package instructions.

\*Take Psyllium husks and Metamucil 2 hours before or after other medication to avoid potential interactions. The fluid used for mixing does not need to be included in your fluid restriction.

## Exercise

Regular exercise can help to keep your bowels moving. Aim to walk for 30 minutes every day. This can be broken up into smaller blocks of exercise e.g. 3 x 10 minutes.

## Medications

Some medications can cause constipation, discuss this with your Doctor, Nurse or Pharmacist if you have concerns. Your doctor may ask you to take some medication to help your bowels open regularly, these may include:

- *Movicol*
- *Coloxyl with senna*
- *Lactulose*