

# The Agave Apple

## Constipation

Constipation is the common digestive complaint in the United States.

Constipation is characterized by hard, lumpy stool or having bowel movements less than 3x per week. While most of the population does not deal with constipation on a regular basis, approximately 2% describes constant or frequent episodes. That is why this month we will be discussing what causes constipation and ways to help your bowels move more smoothly.

**2-3 times**

Constipation is 2-3x more common in women than men.

**\$821 Million**

Approximately the amount of money spent on laxatives in the United State each year.

**23%**

The percentage of children who have suffered from constipation.

### What are the causes of constipation?

- Slow movement of food through bowels
  - Inadequate fiber or water intake
    - Hemorrhoids or obstructions
  - Underlying conditions (ex: IBS)
  - Medications or supplements

### Treatment

#### **Lifestyle Modifications:**

- Take 25-30 grams of fiber daily
- Drink approximately 2 liters of water daily (equal to eight 8oz glasses)
  - Get physically active

#### **Medications:**

- Stool softners or Prunes
- Laxatives (ex: Miralax or Ex-Lax)

**\*\*If it is necessary to take medications that may contribute to constipation scheduled stool softners or laxatives may be helpful, but be cautious not to overuse them\*\***

- Prescription Medications (ex: Linzess or Amitiza)

### **Treatment of hemorrhoids or underlying conditions**

### **Bristol Stool Chart**

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely Liquid

### When to contact your PCP

If you experience "alarm symptoms" such as worsening or severe pain, extreme bloating, fever, nausea/vomiting, black stools or you have not had a bowel movement in over 5 days.

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## More Information on Constipation

### Common Constipation Myths

#### ***It is important to have daily bowel movements.***

The frequency of bowel movements varies by individual. There is no evidence of health risks with not having daily bowel movements.

#### ***Constipation is inevitable with age.***

While it is more common in the older population, people of all ages can experience constipation, and it is a lot more common in children than you would think.

#### ***Constipation can be fixed by coffee.***

It is true that caffeine in coffee can stimulate the muscles in your digestive system to contract, causing a bowel movement. However, because it is a diuretic it draws liquid out of the stools, which can lead to constipation.

Interested in learning more about constipation?

Below I have listed some reputable websites containing more information.

[www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation](http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation)

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org) --> search for constipation

[www.niddk.nih.gov](http://www.niddk.nih.gov) --> search for constipation