

# Constipation Management

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# What to do when you cannot poo!

## What is constipation?

- Constipation is defined as having infrequent bowel movements or difficulty passing a BM that lasts several weeks or longer.
- Typically defined as 3 BMs a week or less.



# Risk Factors?

- Older in age
- Being female
- Dehydration
- Poor diet
- Little physical activity
- Some medications



# Symptoms

- Lumpy, hard stools.
- Straining to have a BM.
- Feeling like there is a blockage.
- Feeling like you cannot fully empty the bowel.
- Stomach pain/discomfort.
- Loss of appetite.



# Physical Therapy Strategies

- Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate
- Relaxation techniques
- Proper breathing techniques
- Toilet positioning
- Exercises



# Hydration

-With dehydration, water is taken from the colon resulting in a stool that is more difficult to pass.

-Drinking  $\frac{1}{2}$  body weight in ounces is a quick and easy way to estimate appropriate water intake.



# Relaxation is key

-In order to be able to effectively pass a bowel movement, the pelvic floor muscles must be relaxed. If not, a signal to the brain is sent that one does not need to go.

-Taking diaphragmatic breaths is helpful because the diaphragm will help to massage the top of the colon leading to improved mobility.

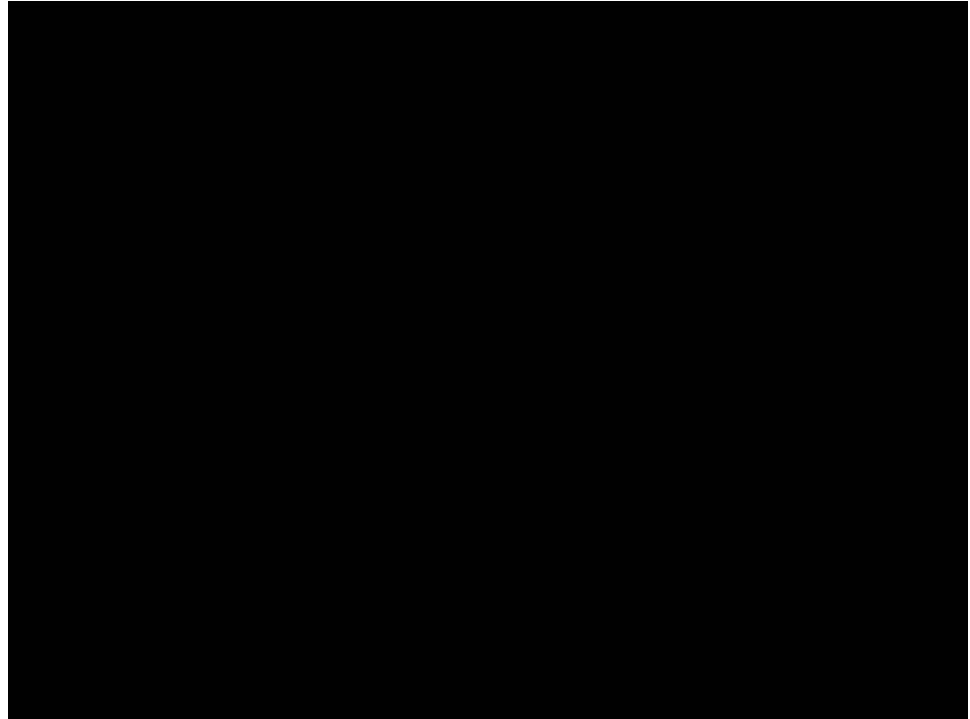
-Avoid straining. Exhale with exertion.



# Diaphragmatic breathing

-Relaxing

-Mobility of organs.

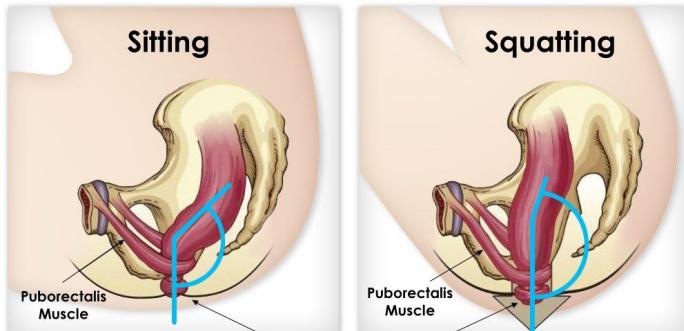


# Positioning

-Get a squatty potty!! It helps with positioning the hip slightly above the knees to relax the rectum for optimal relaxation.

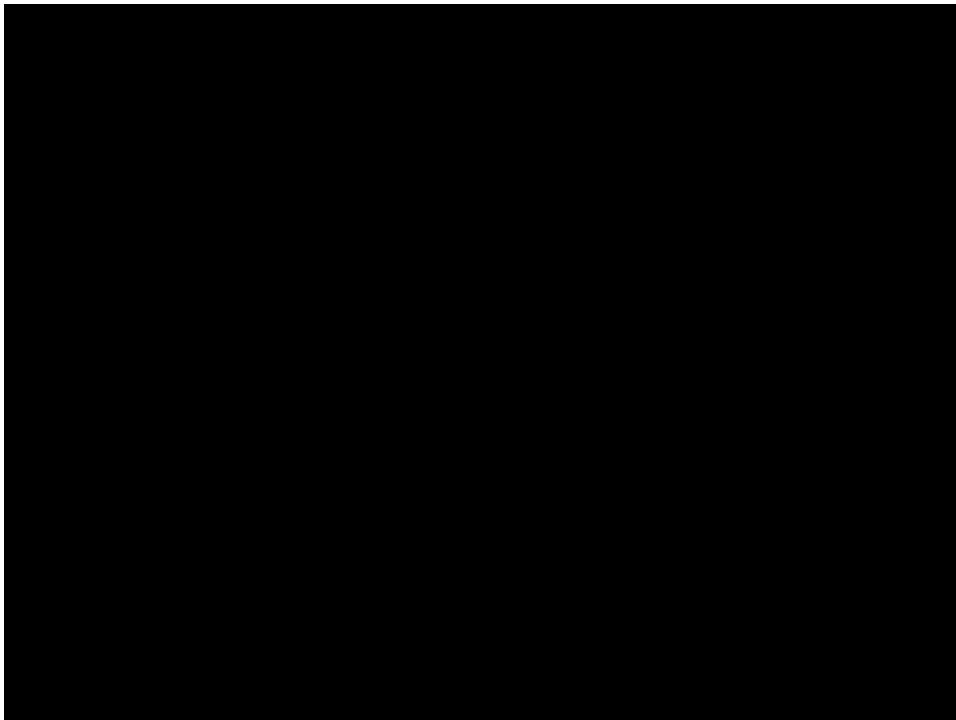


Anorectal Angle



Squatting is the only natural defecation posture

# Stomach massage



# Exercise

-Maintaining an active lifestyle can be helpful in the management of constipation. If you aren't an "exerciser", going for a walk is a good way to get active.

-Gentle mobility exercises to assist with massaging the colon.



# Nutrition Strategies

- Fiber
- Average American gets 12-15 grams
- Goal of minimum of 25-30 grams/day without supplementation
- Helps with soft regular bowel movements, cleans out the digestive tract, feeds the good bacteria, may help lower cholesterol, stabilize blood sugar and helps to keep us full. Essential to have a healthy digestive tract.
- Build fiber slowly-water intake has to go up as fiber goes up

Track your food for a couple of days to see where your fiber intake is truly at.

# High fiber foods

- Whole grains/ancient grains
  - Nuts and seeds
  - Chia seeds being the big winner with 10 grams/2 TBSP
    - Flax, Psyllium husk, apple fiber
  - Avocados
  - Beans/lentils
  - Veggies-any and all
  - Berries
- Prunes and figs-moderation is key
- Always eat the skin



# Eliminating foods that can cause constipation

Processed foods/fried foods/refined carbs

Dairy

Red meat

Artificial sweeteners

Sugars

Alcohol

Processed oils

Food sensitivities

Cold liquids

# Supplements

**Prebiotics** feed the good bacteria

Onions, garlic, unripe bananas, dandelion root, apples, jicama, asparagus

**Probiotics**

Supplements and or Fermented foods

Sauerkraut, kimchi, kombucha, kifer

**Magnesium citrate**

**Cod liver oil**

**Digestive enzymes**

# Eating Patterns

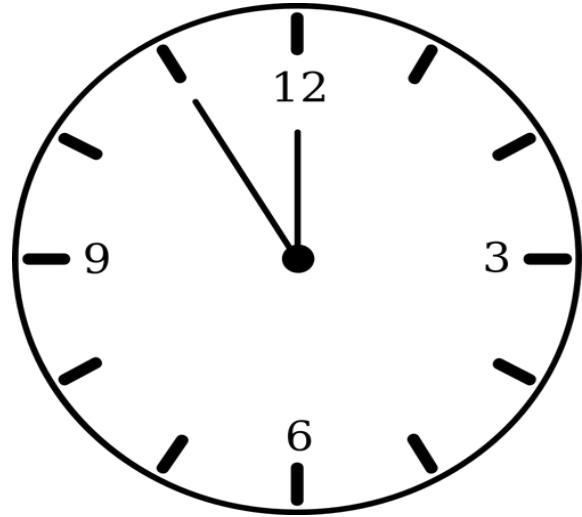
Slow down your eating and make sure to chew your food well

Be mindful of not over eating.

Don't eat too little

Watch eating too late at night.

May need to adopt a regular eating schedule.



# Nutrition takeaways

- Water!
- Increase fiber intake. Add two high fiber foods daily.
- Bring down processed foods and sugars
- Try a good quality probiotic
- Mindful of fullness and timing of eating

The word "bedtime"  
makes kids hungry,  
thirsty and constipated.



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