

Constipation

Constipation is having hard, dry stool that is difficult to pass. It's a common side effect in people with kidney disease. Some reasons for constipation include:

- a lack of physical activity
- not going to washroom when you have the urge to go
- stress and anxiety
- not eating enough fibre
- not drinking enough fluids
- some medicines and medical conditions

Having regular bowel movements for most people means having a bowel movement every 1 to 2 days.

Talk to your healthcare team if you haven't had a bowel movement for 5 or more days.

What can I do to prevent constipation?

- Get active! Physical activities like walking, stretching, gardening, or riding a stationary bike will help get your bowels moving.
- Go to the washroom as soon as you feel the urge.
- Take time to have a bowel movement at a regular time every 1 to 2 days.
- Eat more fibre. Gradually add fibre to your diet to avoid gas or bloating. See the Adding More Fiber to Your Diet section for more information.
- Talk to your healthcare team about taking over-the-counter medicines to manage constipation such as:
 - lactulose, 15-30mL
 - polyethylene glycol 3350 (PEG) without electrolytes, 1 cap full or packet (17g)

Adding More Fiber to Your Diet

Some people with kidney disease need to be careful when adding fiber to their diet. Some higher fibre foods such as bran, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds are also high in phosphorus and potassium and may need to be limited. The following higher fibre foods are good for most people with kidney disease as they are low in potassium. But the amount of potassium could be too much for you if you eat a lot of them. Talk to your dietitian about the type and amount of high fibre foods that are best for you.

Ask your doctor or dietitian about how much fluid you should drink.

Vegetables

- asparagus
- broccoli
- cabbage
- cauliflower
- eggplant
- green beans
- green peas
- jicama
- okra
- snow peas
- turnip

Fruits

- apples
- blueberries
- cherries
- cranberries
- kumquat
- peaches
- pear
- pineapple
- plum
- raspberries
- strawberries
- tangerines and mandarins

Tip: You'll get more fibre if you eat the whole vegetable and fruit instead of drinking juice. Eat the skin or peel of a fruit or vegetable to get the most fibre.

Grains

- barley
- bulgur
- cereals such as shredded wheat
- popcorn
- whole wheat bread
- whole wheat pasta

You can also try adding 1 to 2 tablespoons of ground flaxseed to yogurt, cereals, smoothies, or homemade muffins.

For more information on how to eat more fibre, read the **Tips to Reduce Constipation in Your Kidney Diet** handout.

Restless Leg Syndrome

Restless leg syndrome (RLS) can be troubling for patients with kidney disease. Some people feel itchy, have a crawling or “creepy” sensation, or have aching or burning in their legs. This makes a person want to move more to try and stop the discomfort.

RLS is usually worse after sitting or lying down for long periods of time. The symptoms often get worse as the day goes on, especially at night or during hemodialysis. Having the urge to move around can lead to problems sleeping or make your dialysis treatment less comfortable.

RLS can happen to people with other health conditions and it also can run in families.

Tips for Managing RLS

How can I prevent RLS?

- Stop using or limit caffeine and alcohol.
- Don't smoke or get help to quit smoking.
- Take breaks by going for a walk or stretching.
- Try to do physical activity each day. Being active during the day can help you sleep better at night. Find activities that you enjoy and fit in with your daily life.
- Talk to your healthcare team about using a stationary bike during hemodialysis.

How can I ease discomfort?

- Put a warm towel or heating pad on your legs, or take a warm shower or bath.
- If heat doesn't help, try a cold compress or a cool bath.
- Stretch or massage your legs.
- Practice relaxation techniques from the **Relaxation Patient Handout**.
- Listen to quiet, calming music to help you relax.
- Try activities that make you focus and think such as crosswords, puzzles, or video games.
- Try acupuncture or acupressure. Acupressure is like acupuncture but it uses pressure on different points of the body instead of needles.
- Visit a friend or family member, or call or text them.
- Read the **Difficulty Sleeping Handout** for tips on getting a good night's sleep.

If these tips don't help, talk to your doctor about medicines or other ways to help manage RLS.

Difficulty Sleeping

Feeling tired? Having trouble sleeping?

Many people with kidney disease complain of feeling worn down or having less energy. When the kidneys aren't working properly, you can develop low iron or a buildup of toxins which can make you feel tired.

Getting a good night's sleep is important and will help you have more energy. There are many things you can do to help you get a good night's sleep.

Tips for helping you sleep

- Have coffee, tea, or other drinks with caffeine only in the morning. Choose herbal teas or steamed milk later in the day, if you want to have a hot drink.
- Don't drink alcohol or smoke, especially in the evening.
- Have a bigger meal for lunch, and a lighter meal in the evening.
- Don't use electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets, ebooks or gaming devices 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Create a sleep environment that is quiet, dark, and cool.
- Only use your bedroom for sleeping.
- Don't go to bed until you feel tired, and sleepy. Develop a relaxing bedtime routine. Take a warm bath or listen to soft, relaxing music. Try not to think about things that upset you before going to bed.
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Don't nap during the day.
- Exercise and stay active. Find activities that you enjoy and fit in with your daily life but don't do a strenuous workout close to your bedtime.
- Try acupressure therapy. Acupressure is like acupuncture but it uses pressure on different points of the body instead of needles.
- Practice relaxation techniques from the **Relaxation Patient Handout**.

If you're still having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor, counselor or visit the My Health Alberta website and search improving your sleep. (<http://myhealth.alberta.ca>)