Healthy Living: Tips for Staying Regular

Linda B. Bobroff

Staying regular means avoiding constipation!
Constipation means having a bowel movement fewer than three times a week. Stools are usually hard and can be painful to pass. Constipation is common among older adults.

Why is constipation a concern?
Over time, constipation can result in hemorrhoids, diverticulosis, and the inability to have a bowel movement.

What causes constipation?
• Not eating enough fiber
• Taking certain medications
• Limited physical activity
• Overuse of laxatives
• Dehydration

How can I prevent constipation?
• Eat foods with fiber every day.
• Stay physically active!
• Drink enough fluids every day to avoid dehydration.
• Use a fiber supplement if you are not able to eat enough dietary fiber every day. Talk to your doctor before using fiber supplements.

What foods contain fiber?
• High-fiber cereals
• Bran muffins
• Beans (like kidney, pinto, and black beans)
• High-fiber bread
• Fruits and vegetables
• Popcorn and nuts

For more information about fiber, see Facts about Fiber at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy849 and Guide to Fiber Supplements at http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fs162.

Figure 1. Legumes are great sources of dietary fiber as well as many other nutrients.
Credits: Polka Dot Images


2. Linda B. Bobroff, PhD, RD, LD/N, professor, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county’s UF/IFAS Extension office.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.