

14 Foods That Help You Get Up and Go (On a Regular Basis)

By Scott LaFee | April 23, 2019

Constipation is a pressing issue. It's estimated that roughly 20 percent of Americans experience it at any given time, with older people more likely to suffer than younger and women more often than men.

Treatments for chronic constipation include stool softeners, fiber supplements, osmotic and stimulant laxatives (the former attract and keep water in the colon, softening things up, while the latter accelerates colonic muscle motion), and secretagogues, such as lubiprostone and linaclotide, which induce cellular activity that promotes and improves intestinal function.

A lot of things cause constipation, from certain medications and nutritional supplements to conditions ranging from diabetes to inflammatory bowel disease. And then there's the typical modern American diet and lifestyle, which for too many people are worth, well, you know.

Too much fat, too little fiber. Not enough daily exercise or water consumed.

But some foods can actually help things move along. Here are 14:



- Apples. A good source of fiber. National guidelines recommend 30 to 38 grams of fiber per day for men and 25 grams for women between 18 and 50 years of age. Another way to think about it is 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories consumed. One small apple contains four grams of fiber, including pectin, which has a laxative effect.
- Prunes. The old stand-by so that you don't have to keep standing by. A one-ounce serving of prunes contains two grams of fiber, plus sorbitol — a type of sugar alcohol that draws water into the intestines, helping to flush things out.
- Kiwifruit. These little guys are notably high in fiber, especially if you eat the fuzzy skin (triple the fiber intake of the fruit's flesh alone). A small kiwi contains 2.3 grams of fiber.
- Flaxseeds. One tablespoon contains three grams of fiber, both soluble and insoluble.
- Pears. A medium-sized pear has six grams of fiber, meeting up to one-quarter of daily fiber needs. It also contains sorbitol and fructose, which can also draw water into the intestines.
- Beans. Most varieties are high in fiber, from black beans at 7.5 grams per cooked half cup to 9.5 grams for half a cup of navy beans.
- Rhubarb. Each stalk includes roughly one gram of fiber, mostly the bulk-promoting insoluble kind. The celery-like vegetable (but not actually related) also contains a laxative-like compound called sennoside A.
- Artichokes. The semi-edible portions of the flowering plant contain prebiotics — substances that aren't digestible by humans but gobbled up by beneficial bacterial in the gut, which means improved intestinal microbial health.
- Kefir. A fermented milk beverage that also contains probiotics — live bacteria that promote numerous health benefits, including regular bowel movements.
- Figs. Because a half cup of dried figs contains 7.5 grams of fiber and you give one.
- Sweet potatoes. One medium sweet potato contains four grams of fiber.
- Lentils. Like beans, they pack in the fiber: eight grams in a boiled half-cup.
- Chia seeds. Don't sprinkle these on "pets." They're better eaten, with one ounce containing a whopping 11 grams of fiber, especially the soluble kind, which absorbs water to form a gel that softens and moistens stool.
- Oat bran. We're talking about oats that still possess their fiber-rich outer casing. One-third of a cup contains five grams of fiber, almost half as much more than more common rolled or old-fashioned varieties.

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