Tips to Reduce Constipation on Your Kidney Diet

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Constipation is a common problem for people with kidney disease. Constipation can be caused by a diet low in fibre, too little exercise, fluid restrictions, some medications, or stress.

Fibre will help to prevent constipation.

- Fibre helps to keep your digestive system healthy and prevents constipation by making stools bulky and soft.
- After you start a higher fibre diet it may take a few days to notice a difference. You need to keep eating a high fibre diet to have regular bowel movements.
- Increase your fibre intake slowly. Too much fibre too quickly may cause constipation.
- Spread your fibre intake out throughout the day; do not have it all at one meal.
- Adding fibre to your diet may cause gas at first. This problem should go away as your body gets used to the change in diet. This is another reason why it is important to increase fibre slowly.
- If eating more high fibre foods does not help your constipation, talk to your doctor about which laxatives are safe for you to use.

Tips to increase fibre

When your potassium and phosphorus levels are well controlled:

- Eat 5 to 6 servings of low potassium vegetables and fruit a day. Ask your dietitian if you can eat more vegetables and fruit than this.

  Note: One serving of vegetables and fruit is ½ cup (125 mL) or 1 medium vegetable or fruit.
- Eat skins or peels of vegetables and fruit (except potatoes) as they are high in fibre.

- Fruits with the most fibre are pears, apples, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, strawberries, cherries, and grapes.
- Prunes can be eaten in small amounts. Have no more than 3 dried or canned prunes per day, or no more than ¼ cup (60 mL) prune juice per day.
- Boil vegetables to decrease potassium content. Boiling will not decrease fibre content.
- Vegetables with the most fibre are green peas, turnips, corn, carrots (boiled), cabbage, green or yellow beans, broccoli (raw), and cauliflower.
- Add 1 to 3 Tbsp (15 to 45 mL) of bran cereal to another favourite cereal. Talk to your dietitian before eating more than 3 Tbsp (45 mL) per day.
- Add 1 to 2 Tbsp (15 to 30 mL) of ground flax seed to yogurt or hot cereal. Do not have more than 2 Tbsp (30 mL) per day.
- Add wheat bran to cereal, soups, casseroles, hamburger, gravy, pudding, or other foods. Start with 1 tsp (5 mL) per serving and increase by 1 tsp (5 mL) each day up to 2 Tbsp (30 mL) of bran per day.
- Other good sources of fibre are 60% whole wheat bread, Corn Bran® cereal, oatmeal, barley, and unsalted popcorn.

When your potassium or phosphorus levels are high your dietitian may ask you to use fibre supplements. These add fibre to your diet but do not raise the phosphorus or potassium in your blood.

One kind of fibre supplement is inulin powder. Inulin powder is tasteless. You can mix it with food or liquids such as applesauce, hamburger meat, or soup. You can buy inulin powders in grocery stores and drug stores. Follow the directions on the package. Avoid brands with added calcium, vitamin D, or other vitamins or minerals.
Recipes

Applesauce Bran Muffins

1 cup white flour 250 mL
1 Tbsp baking powder 15 mL
1 tsp cinnamon 5 mL
½ tsp nutmeg 1 mL
⅛ cup wheat bran 300 mL
1 cup unsweetened applesauce 250 mL
⅛ cup oil 60 mL
⅛ cup honey 60 mL
1 egg

Sift together all dry ingredients, except bran. Add the bran and mix in. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients. Mix liquid ingredients and add to the well in the dry ingredients.

Mix until just blended together. Do not over mix. Spoon into greased muffin tins. Bake at 350 °F (180 °C) for 15 to 20 minutes.

Yield: 12 muffins

Nutrient analysis per muffin:

- Calories 130
- Dietary Fibre 3 g
- Carbohydrate 20 g
- Sodium 130 mg
- Protein 3 g
- Potassium 108 mg
- Fat 5 g
- Phosphorus 108 mg*

*If you are on a low phosphorus diet, ask your dietitian if this recipe is right for you.

High Fibre Apple Cinnamon Crêpes

1 egg, large
½ tsp cinnamon 2.5 mL
½ tsp white sugar 2.5 mL
¼ cup skim milk 60 mL
¼ cup white, all-purpose flour 60 mL
1⅔ tsp unsalted, non-hydrogenated margarine 7.5 mL
2 Tbsp unsweetened applesauce
2 Tbsp inulin powder 30 mL

Beat egg. Mix in sugar and cinnamon. Add milk and mix well. Slowly add the flour, beating constantly. Add the margarine, applesauce, and inulin powder. Stir until thoroughly mixed.

Heat a skillet and coat the surface with a small amount of oil. Pour batter onto hot skillet, about ¼ cup (60 mL) per crêpe.

Yield: 4 crêpes

Nutrient analysis per crêpe:

- Calories 60
- Dietary Fibre 5 g
- Carbohydrate 8 g
- Sodium 25 mg
- Protein 2 g
- Potassium 41 mg
- Fat 1 g
- Phosphorus 25 mg

Other tips

- Eat regular meals and snacks throughout the day. This keeps food moving through your bowel.
- Make sure you are drinking as much fluid as you are allowed. Talk to your doctor or dietitian to find out if it is safe for you to have more fluids.
- Try to train your bowels by using the bathroom regularly at about the same time each day. Do not ignore the urge to have a bowel movement.
- Increase your physical activity to help get your bowels moving.