Laxative Habit: A term used to describe dependency upon laxatives in order to move the bowel. An individual with a laxative "habit" is unable to move their bowel without taking a laxative.

What are the Consequences?
Essentially, whether taken short term or long term, laxatives create and perpetuate the very problem they were intended to correct.

Laxatives induce constipation as the tissues become dried out, muscles become weak from lack of use, and the delicate nerves lining the colon become damaged. This damage slows intestinal motility and results in constipation.

With damage from long term laxative abuse, the colon may fail to function entirely. This is laxative dependency. An individual who abuses laxatives may have diarrhea like stools in place of well formed stools.

Long term laxative abusers may experience weight loss, hair loss, vomiting, abdominal pain, low energy, thirst, dry eyes, headaches, puffiness, mood swings, bone pain and suffer symptoms of dehydration.

With prolonged use of laxatives a number of serious problems may arise such as fluid and electrolyte imbalances, damage to other organs, and syndromes resembling colitis.

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How Does the Laxative Habit Develop?

The laxative habit is typically developed unintentionally. It may simply start with the use of a stimulant laxative to achieve overnight relief from constipation. If an individual has been coping with constipation for some time, the relief from constipation can feel profound and may be enough to inspire further use (misuse) of laxatives. Though these individuals may have misconceptions about normal bowel function, their intent is usually to restore normal bowel function, not to destroy it.

Below, some reasons why a laxative habit may develop:

- Having false beliefs about the frequency of moving the bowel.
- To experience the feeling of relief from the purgative action of laxatives.
- Misleading marketing of laxatives as chocolates, gum, or beverages implies that laxatives may be consumed without adverse consequences.
- Attempting to cope with the constipating side effects of medications or supplements.
- Attempting to loose water weight (or relief from bloating) in preparation for a competition or exhibition (athletes, jockeys, models, etc).
- Misguided dieters* attempting to loose weight.
- Individuals with an eating disorder* attempting to loose weight.

*In these cases, the determination of laxative abuse can be difficult. The abuser may vigorously deny laxative use.

How Does Laxative Abuse Progress to a Laxative Habit?

Depending on the individual and their circumstances, the abuse of laxatives can progress to a “habit” suddenly, or gradually.

First, the purgative action of a single dose of a stimulant laxative over empties the bowel. With an over emptied bowel, three days may pass before the individual will feel the need to move the bowel again. With the passing of each day, anxiety to move the bowels can grow. By the third day of not moving the bowel, a concerned individual (fearing that they are now badly constipated) may take another dose.

Again, after achieving the desired results, another three days may go by before a bowel movement occurs. This delay reinforces the need to continue the use of the laxative.

This is the point at which cultivation of the “habit” can begin.

Furthermore, a vulnerable individual may conclude that they should continue to take the laxative (and take it everyday) to correct the problem until the product box is empty (the packaging on many products indicates that laxatives can be taken for up to two weeks). For a healthy individual who is looking for occasional relief from constipation, laxatives are rarely needed beyond one single dose.

Because of the damage that laxatives can cause, ever increasing dosages of laxatives may be needed in order to achieve the desired effect. Where one laxative dose produced results, now two, then three doses a day or more, are required. Individuals who abuse laxatives for a long period of time may end up taking as many as 6 to 8 laxatives a day. Long term laxative use can damage the colon.

What About Fiber Laxatives?

Many older persons report that they are not constipated because they take fiber laxatives everyday. This is also a laxative habit. If these individuals were to suddenly stop taking the fiber laxative, they would likely suffer constipation due to the gradual dehydration that dry fiber laxatives can cause. This dehydration damages the colon. Rehydration of the body and the reversal of damage to the colon takes time.

Dry fiber laxatives draw water from the body whether the body has it to spare or not. Furthermore, if the body already is dehydrated, the dry fiber laxative can form an impaction, a serious blockage in the colon that results in some 2,000 deaths every year in long term care facilities.

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Can I Quit Laxatives “Cold Turkey”?
The laxative habit cannot be kicked "cold turkey" without serious health risks.
If you think you are dependant on laxatives to move your bowel, consult with your doctor about how to gradually wean yourself off the laxative and discuss strategies to recover normal bowel function.
If your doctor has prescribed a laxative, find out if it is still necessary to continue taking it. If your doctor has prescribed a laxative to help you to cope with the constipating side effects of a prescription medication or a supplement, talk with your doctor about your options.

Important Health Point to Remember: Whether you are dependant on laxatives because your doctor has a prescribed long term use of a laxative, or dependent upon laxatives from self medicating, do not quit the laxative without talking to your doctor about how to reverse the habit.

Can Fruit-Eze™ Help?
Yes. We have a bowel program that can help you to recover from laxative dependency.
Because Fruit-Eze pure fruit blend helps to both heal and retrain the colon, it is ideal for individuals who want to recover normal bowel function and achieve regularity.
Fruit-Eze™ is a unique blend of concentrated insoluble and soluble fibers that help the body to achieve regularity, to avoid constipation, and to avoid constipation leading to impaction.

Get Going...Naturally™.

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