### Medication Induced Constipation

Many health supplements, over-the-counter drugs and prescription medications have constipating side effects. Some examples of these are pain relief medications (especially opioids), anti-depressants, iron, calcium, cold medicine, and antacids.

### Laxatives

Many of the bowel interventions (laxatives) intended to alleviate constipation have actions and side effects that actually contribute to constipation.

### Laxative abuse (Laxative Habit)

Laxatives can be habit forming, requiring increased dosages to achieve results, until finally, the colon fails to function properly. Individuals with the laxative habit are dependent upon laxatives to move their bowels. These individuals take laxatives daily exceeding recommended usage, and taking them in amounts that exceed the recommended dosage - overdosing. Without laxatives, individuals with the laxative habit become constipated and are at increased risk of developing an impaction.

### Poor Diet & Changes in Diet

A diet that is high in animal products (meats, dairy products, eggs), and high in sugar (rich desserts and sweets), but low in dietary fiber (vegetables, fruits, whole grains) can result in constipation. Highly processed and instant foods (frozen & boxed dinners, fast foods) are often rich in fats and sugars, and contain little dietary fiber.

Additionally, significant changes in diet can bring about bouts of constipation as the body adjusts to the change in available fiber and fluids in the “new diet”.

### Irritable Bowel Syndrome

I.B.S. is characterized by spasms (interruptions) in the rhythmic action of the colon muscles. These spasms can delay or speed up the passage of waste matter through the colon. This can lead to constipation, diarrhea, or alternating constipation and diarrhea.

### Depression

Depression can include a depressed appetite, poor eating habits, a reduction in fluid intake, a reduction in physical exercise, lethargy leading to excessive bed rest, and drug abuse. These factors can bring about constipation.

### Stress

Response to stress can cause disruptions in normal bowel function. Being too busy to go to the bathroom, reducing fluid intake, skipping meals, eating in a hurry (not properly chewing food), and eating convenience or fast foods all contribute to constipation.

Emotional response to significant personal stress (such as work, school, marriage, divorce, finances, and loss of employment) may also affect the gastrointestinal tract resulting in loss of appetite, constipation or diarrhea. Emotional responses can affect the rhythmic action of the entire G.I. tract. Interruptions in these rhythms can cause delays (resulting in constipation), or they can speed up the rhythm (resulting in diarrhea), or a combination of both.

### Disease

Many diseases affect the tissues of gastrointestinal tract and produce constipation.
**Hemorrhoids and Anal Fissures**  
During a bowel movement, the fear of the pain that accompanies these conditions can produce a spasm of the anal sphincter muscle, which can delay a bowel movement. Delaying bowel movements causes stools to dry out and harden making them difficult to pass. The result is constipation.

**Nerve Damage**  
The gastrointestinal tract is lined with nerve endings that transmit messages to the brain. Injury to these nerves, injury to the spinal cord, or interruptions of the transmission of messages to the brain due to tumors pressing on the spinal cord, or medications that affect neurological activity, can produce constipation.

**Colonic Motility Disorders**  
The gastrointestinal tract is lined with muscles that contract and relax in a wavelike motion, known as peristalsis. Peristalsis moves the nutrients from the foods we eat, from one organ of the G.I. tract to the next. Delays and disruptions in this activity can result in constipation.

**Travel**  
People may experience constipation while traveling due to dietary changes (eating fast foods while on the road, or not eating fresh foods), not drinking enough fluids, not having easy access to a restroom (withholding stools is common with road travel), and interruptions in their daily bowel habits due to time zone changes. Additionally, airplane flights can cause dehydration which can bring about constipation.

**Mechanical Compression**  
The lumen (interior) of the colon can become compressed due to pregnancy, scarring, inflammation, and infection around diverticula, tumors, and cancer. Compression of the colon can result in constipation.

**Pregnancy**  
Compression of the intestine due to a pregnant womb, and the changes in hormones that occur during pregnancy can cause constipation.

**Hormones**  
Hormonal disturbances such as an inactive thyroid gland can result in constipation.

**Imaginary Constipation**  
Many people believe themselves to be constipated because they think that they need to move their bowels every day or several times a day.

Clinically, it is considered normal to move the bowel once every two to three days. Passage of these stools should be soft, flexible and easy to pass. The frequency of passage will vary from individual to individual. So, it will be normal for some to move their bowels everyday, normal for some to move their bowel every other day and normal for others to move their bowel once every three days.

How does this contribute to constipation? If you *think you are constipated* you may take a laxative to try to move your bowels. Laxatives can over empty the bowel. This means that you may not move your bowels for two to three days which may reinforce your belief that you are constipated, so you take another dose of the laxative, and so on. Or you may stress about being constipated. As was previously stated, stress can lead to interruptions in the rhythm of your G.I. Tract which can slow down or increase intestinal motility resulting in constipation, diarrhea or both.

**Older Adults**  
Typically, older adults do not move their bowels as often as they did when they were younger. This is because everything slows down with age. This affects regularity. A slow metabolism results in less intestinal activity and less activity means decreased intestinal muscle tone (needed to help to maintain regularity). For this reason daily exercise for older adults is particularly important.

Additionally, illness, and the breakdown of other bodily functions can also contribute to constipation.

**Smoking**  
Smoking causes digestive distress. When the digestive system is under stress, constipation and diarrhea are more likely to occur.

Ready for Regularity?  
Fruit-Eze™ pure fruit regularity blend can help you to avoid constipation.

© 2004 Fruit-Eze™, Inc.  
P.O. Box 91275, Portland, OR 97291  
1-888-Regular / 1-888-734-8527 / 503-297-4126  
www.fruiteze.com / info@fruiteze.com