

First Dietitians



## Nutritional Care: Managing Constipation in Older Adults

### Eating for Health: Older Adults in Care Homes

**Constipation is common among older adults, particularly those adults living in care homes.**

There are a number of causes such as reduced intake of food and fluid, medications and lack of physical activity. The consequences of constipation can be reduced quality of life, reduced appetite and weight loss and is sometimes seen as an increase in aggressive behaviour in those individuals with dementia. Treatment for constipation is usually through laxative use but there are other ways to help and prevent constipation.

#### Key messages to prevent and manage constipation

##### Dietary advice

- Regular eating pattern (3 meals per day with snacks if appropriate)
- At least 8 cups of fluid every day (at least 1600mls/day)
  - If your resident doesn't drink very much try to use foods that contain a lot of fluid such as milk puddings, juicy fruits, custards, soups, jelly, sorbets and ice-cream
- Increasing certain fibres in the diet - soluble fibre such as oats, peas, beans and lentils, fruits such as prunes, apples, peaches, apricots, raspberries and strawberries.

##### Some practical food examples

- Porridge - add chopped prunes/apricots or pureed fruit
- Drinks - offer pure fruit juice throughout the day – for example prune juice, apple juice, peach juice
- Smoothies - blend up fruit with milk and ice cream - see recipes below
- Snacks - tinned or fresh fruit chopped or pureed with cream/ ice-cream/ custard
- Yoghurts with pieces of fruit/ milk puddings/ custard/ ice cream
- Plenty of vegetables with meals
- Try using more beans, peas and lentils in casseroles, soups and with meals.



##### Non-dietary advice

- Set a regular bowel pattern for your resident
  - First thing in the morning
  - 30 minutes after a meal
- Respond quickly to your resident's request to use the toilet
- Provide a private, quiet and comfortable toilet area (wherever possible)
- Physical activity
  - If fully mobile - walking for 15-20 minutes 1-2x daily
  - If limited mobility - walking at least 50 feet 2x daily

## Recipes for nourishing high fibre drinks (2 small servings)

**Always** introduce the higher fibre drinks **slowly**, maybe a small cup daily and increase if tolerated.

Recipes can be altered according to taste and thickness.

### *Prune and Pear Delight*

- 300mls prune juice,
- 1 tin pear halves (drained),
- 5 tbsp drinking chocolate

Blend and serve chilled.

Calories: 207

Protein: 2.3g

Fibre: 3.8g

### *Apricot Delight*

- 1 tin apricot halves (drained),
- 200mls orange juice,
- 3 scoops vanilla ice cream,
- ½ tablespoon honey

Blend and serve chilled.

Calories: 166

Protein: 2.4g

Fibre: 2g

### *Banana and Strawberry Smoothie*

- 2 bananas,
- ½ pint full fat milk,
- ½ thick and creamy strawberry yoghurt (150g),
- 2 tbsp of milk powder,
- 1 tps sugar

Blend and serve chilled.

Calories: 308

Protein: 11g

Fibre: 1.9g

### *Power Shake*

- 400mls full fat milk,
- 2 bananas,
- 5 tbsp Ready Brek®,
- 4 tbsp of dried milk powder,
- 4 tbsp milkshake powder

Blend together and serve chilled.

Calories: 307

Protein: 11.4g

Fibre: 2.5g



For further information please contact First Community Health and Care Dietitians  
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