

Constipation

Constipation is a slowing down of **digested** material through the **gastrointestinal tract**. It has a variety of causes: lack of **fibre** in the diet, leading a largely **sedentary** lifestyle or **pregnancy**, and sometimes simply nobody knows why.

Constipation is a common problem and in its most severe form it is called obstipation, which is failure to pass either **stool** or gastrointestinal gas. The normal frequency of **bowel movements** varies from person to person – some people have bowel movement every day, others three per week – but fewer than three times a week, especially if the stools are hard and dry, is more than likely constipation. The good news is that most cases of constipation are **short-term**. A whole range of highly effective OTC products is available for dealing with the symptoms of constipation, but a change of lifestyle may

also be something that a customer might need to consider when taking these laxatives ...

Male pharmacy customer: Hallo! Do you speak English?
PTA: Yes, a little. How may I help you?

I think I may be suffering from constipation. I haven't been able to, you know, go for the last three days or so.

Are you taking any medication at the moment?

What kind of medication?

Well, for example some painkillers that contain codeine have been known to cause constipation. Or some anti-depressants also cause problems for some people.

No, I don't take any of the things that you mentioned. Is there anything that you can recommend?

Certainly, we have a very effective product that will help you soon. It contains bisacodyl, which is the medication mostly recommended for **relief** of constipation.

What type of drug is it?

It's a so-called stimulant laxative and it works directly on the colon to activate bowel movement. It is usually **well-tolerated** and works within six or eight hours.

You might also consider taking a look at what you have had to eat over the last week or so.

Why is that?

Well, one of the main causes of constipation is a lack of **roughage** in your diet. Very good **sources** of roughage are **whole-wheat** products or products with **spelt** or **rye** in them. Apples are also an excellent source of fibre.

Now that you say it, I haven't been eating regularly the last couple of weeks or so. You know how it is: deadlines to meet at work, rushing from one meeting to another, getting a quick snack at the local kebab shop, that type of thing!

Oh yes, that happens here during the cold and flu season, when we are really run off our feet! It's also essential to get enough **fluids** during the day as well.

I'll try and remember that.

What I should also advise you not to take these laxatives every day. Maybe it's done with one **dragée**, don't take the next one within three days. Your colon needs time to fill again and if you eat regularly, perhaps it won't need further help. But if you have any **prolonged** symptoms such as bad **stomach cramps**, please consult your doctor as soon as possible.

Don't worry, I will. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Goodbye. ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

Constipation	Verstopfung
digested	verdaut
gastrointestinal tract	Magen-Darm-Trakt
fibre	Ballaststoffe
sedentary	sitzend
pregnancy	Schwangerschaft
stool	Stuhl
bowel movements	Stuhlgang
short-term	kurzfristig
relief	Erleichterung, Linderung
well-tolerated	gut verträglich
roughage	Ballaststoffe
sources	Quellen
whole-wheat	Vollkornweizen
spelt	Dinkel
rye	Roggen
kebab shop	Döner-Imbiss
fluids	Flüssigkeiten
prolonged	anhaltend, andauernd
stomach cramps	Magenkrämpfe