

Avoiding constipation after vaginal repair surgery

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Following vaginal repair surgery it is best to avoid putting pressure on the vaginal area by straining to use your bowels.

If constipation becomes a problem while you are in hospital you will be given a laxative to help relieve it.

Once you are back to a normal diet after your surgery you can help prevent or relieve constipation by eating high fibre foods and drinking plenty of fluid.

Fibre, which is the roughage in plants, increases the bulk and softness of the stool and makes it less likely that you will have to strain to use your bowel.

Eat regularly over the day. Your body needs food every few hours to stimulate the bowel.

For the best results include fibre from a variety of foods. Try the following high fibre foods:

- fruits and vegetables (leave skins on if possible)
- wholemeal and wholegrain bread (types with lots of grain contain more fibre and some people find soy and linseed bread helps their bowels)
- high fibre breakfast cereals such as muesli, Allbran, Guardian, Healthwise, Bran Plus, etc.
- dried beans such as baked beans, kidney beans, split peas
- dried fruit, nuts
- brans such as wheat bran, rice bran, barley bran or oat bran can also help. Start with one to two tablespoons. More may cause wind or bloating.
- prunes work well for some people. As well as fibre they contain a substance that stimulates the bowel. Start with six prunes or 1/2 cup of prune juice.

Drink plenty of fluid – at least seven or eight cups a day. Fibre works by absorbing fluid. If you don't drink enough it can make the constipation worse. Don't drink too much strong tea and coffee as these make you produce a lot of urine and can 'dry you out'

Don't ignore the urge to go to the toilet when it comes. If you need to, take the laxatives that have been prescribed for you. If your bowels are not working or you still have to strain, contact your local doctor (GP).

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