

the Midwife Method

Thriving through Pregnancy



Relieving Constipation during
Pregnancy

Overview and Contents

In this comprehensive guide, you will learn:

- The root causes of constipation during pregnancy.
- Strategies on how to prevent constipation--remember, not everyone is the same! What works for one person may not always work for another.
- Strategies to mitigate and treat constipation during pregnancy.

Index

Introduction.....	page 1
Guidelines for Healthier Bowel Movements.....	page 3
Remedies for General Constipation.....	page 4
Remedies for Acute Constipation.....	page 6
Recipes.....	page 6

All content provided in any format by the Midwife Method, including: text, images, audio, video or other formats are created for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding your pregnancy or the symptoms you are experiencing. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking care.

Introduction

Many pregnant people experience some degree of constipation intermittently throughout pregnancy. So if that's you, the good news is, you're not alone and there are solutions! The hormones of pregnancy slow down the digestive tract for good reason. When food moves slowly, it provides time for more nutrients to be absorbed into the body from the food you eat along with extra water, which both get diverted to nourish your body and your baby. So while there is a method to your body's madness, it can unfortunately also cause constipation for some people during pregnancy.

The basic root causes of constipation are:

- Insufficient fiber in your diet
- Dehydration
- Lack of physical movement and exercise
- Certain dietary supplements

Although pregnancy itself can also be a temporarily cause of constipation, you can learn the following simple strategies to get the relief you need for the duration of your pregnancy. Luckily, there are many easy ways to get things moving and keep them moving despite being pregnant! **With intentional practice, these root causes can easily be corrected so you too** can enjoy more comfortable and regular bowel habits during pregnancy and beyond (aka able to poop regularly = happy days!)

Most people have a bowel movement every single day, usually around the same time, and for some, following each meal. Constipation exists when your own bowel pattern (poop schedule) changes and becomes less frequent, is strained, or when your stool (poop) becomes hard (or comes out in round pellets rather than a long, soft stool). You may be constipated if you are not having daily bowel movements or if your normal bowel habits change.

Prenatal vitamins can cause constipation and some supplements more than others, especially Iron supplements. In general, consider switching to a 'whole foods' prenatal vitamin. They are more expensive, but much better than other supplements and can greatly reduce digestive complaints of all sorts, including constipation. The reason for this is that they are made from actual plants, making them more bio-available, meaning the body can break them down and assimilate the vitamins and minerals more efficiently.

You may also consider avoiding iron sulfate supplementation as this form of iron increases constipation. Remember! Iron supplements are not necessary unless you are anemic. Please refer to the Increasing your Iron pregnancy guide for a thorough review of iron supplementation options.

If constipation is a persistent problem, it may be associated with a gluten intolerance or allergy. Stay away from all sources of gluten (breads, pasta, crackers, etc) for at least 2 weeks and see if the constipation improves. If it comes back after reintroducing gluten items, you may think about permanently avoiding them for better health!

Preventing and Mitigating Constipation

General Guidelines for Healthier Bowel Movements

First, you must always go to the bathroom when you have the urge--this is super important!! Listen to your body and respond intentionally.

Bowel movements work best when in the squatting position. Since this is not practical in Western culture, it can be useful to put a stool under the toilet to place your feet on--they actually make specific stools for this purpose! This brings your knees up and essentially puts you in the squatting position while seated on the toilet.

Prevention Strategies

Prevention is key. It is easier to prevent issues than to have to deal with an acute, uncomfortable situation. When you work to keep the body in balance, you will avoid having to resort to the more drastic solutions mentioned below. Constipation is an indication that there is a lack in some or all of the following areas, so go ahead and take action on these daily prevention strategies.

- **Water** – dehydration is the most common cause of constipation. **You should drink at least 10-12 cups (4 quarts) of water everyday.**

- **Fiber** – lack of fruit and vegetables, and whole grains are also common causes of constipation. Greatly increase daily fruit (3-5 fruits a day or 2 cups) and vegetable (4-6 servings or 2-4 cups) intake. **You can also try eliminating white flour products such as pastries, pizza, potatoes, cheese and red meats as these foods are known to clog up the system and slow the plumbing down.**
- **Exercise** – exercise helps all the systems function properly! While we move on the outside, our bodies respond by moving on the inside. **A nice brisk walk following meals is known to aid digestion and reduce blood sugar levels from recently ingested foods.**

Everyday Remedies for Constipation

These are non habit forming and good for everyday use

- **Smoothies** - Drink daily; mix a variety of fruits, greens, live yogurt and a little apple juice (no more than 4 ounces), water, coconut water or milk. You can even throw in your supplements and they will get all crushed up so you can simply drink them :)
- **Old Fashion Oatmeal** - start your day with a nutritious bowl of oatmeal to keep you regular.
- **Irish Soda Bread (Brown Bread)** - wonderful, nutritious, hearty quick bread. A couple slices a day will keep you in balance. Full recipe is at the end of this guide!

- **Prunes** - Place 20-30 prunes in a pot, cover with water and simmer for 30 minutes. Pour contents in a jar and refrigerate. Eat 5-8 prunes along with the watery juice every morning to stay regular. Enjoy with your oatmeal!
- **Peppermint Tea** - Make the tea the night before so that it is good and strong. Drink a cup every morning. Avoid it if you suffer from heartburn. Although Peppermint helps all sorts of digestive complaints, it can aggravate heartburn.
- **Flax Seeds** - At night, place 1 Tablespoons of flax seeds in a cup of water, let sit overnight and drink the entire mixture in the morning. Alternately, grind 1 Tablespoon of flax seeds, allow to soak in a cup of water for 30 minutes and drink. Follow with another glass of water and allow 30 minutes before eating a meal.
-
- **Bitter Tonic** - Take 1 dropper 20 minutes before meals to increase and enhance digestion and movement. This is also a wonderful general remedy for digestive upsets including bloating, nausea, heartburn, or aches. **My favorite bitters for pregnancy include: Chamomile, Dandelion, Goldenseal, and a pinch of Gentian Root (all in tincture form).** Avoid any 'bitter product' with Rue, Tansy, Wormwood, Southernwood or Centaury.
- **Rutin Supplement** - Take 500 mg to treat Hemorrhoids and prevent constipation. Please refer to the Varicose Veins and Hemorrhoid Guides for more information on how to treat Hemorrhoids.

Remedies and Recipes for Acute Constipation

** Only take until you get things moving and then vigorously employ the Prevention*

*Strategies outlined above**

Some of the remedies below are intense. **In particular, Senna can be habit forming (meaning the body learns to depend on its effects) rather than improve its own ability to eliminate root causes of constipation.** However, for very acute cases, senna *will* get the job done. If taken in tea form, only steep for 5-10 minutes, as it is very strong. **Avoid using Senna in the first trimester of pregnancy.**

- **'Smooth Move'** is a tea made specifically to facilitate bowel movement. It can be purchased at a health food store. Steep for 5 minutes and drink a cup before bed.

Recipes

Fruit Laxative

- 1 cup Prunes (pitted)
- 1 cup Dates (pitted)
- 1 cup Raisins
- 1 cup of nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts, pecans)
- ½ cup Orange or Apple juice
- ½ cup Senna Tea or Smooth move
- ¼ cup Prune juice

Simmer fruit with tea and enough juice to cover just until soft (about 10 minutes). Mix all ingredients in a blender. Divide into 1 tbsp balls, refrigerate or freeze and eat 1 ball every night before bed. Makes about 60 (1 tbsp) servings. Because the amount of Senna in these is very small, they can be taken regularly.

Poop Goop

- ½ pound prunes
- ½ pound figs
- 1 cup of molasses
- 1/8 pound Senna powder

Grind figs and prunes very finely and mix together. Warm molasses and thoroughly mix in the powdered Senna and then the fruit. Mix well, refrigerate and take a ¼ tsp at night. May increase to ½ tsp if needed. This is best not taken regularly.

Mellow Jello

- 1 cup Apple sauce + Prune Juice
- ¾ cup Mashed prunes / figs or dates (enough to fill container you use)
- ¼ cup Bran
- 1 box of Jello

Mix apples and prune mix, along with bran. Use about ½ cup less liquid than is called for on the jello box. Enjoy as a treat from time to time. If you want it to be very strong, make a tea with Senna or smooth move and use that as your liquid component.

The Kearney's Irish Soda Bread Recipe

Modified for even better health! And I can do that, because I'm a Kearney too!

Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups of freshly milled whole grain (Wheat berries (combination of varieties (soft and hard and winter red), best for consistency), or spelt (super yummy), by the way; fresh spelt grain can be chewed to 'gum like' consistency and enjoyed by kids for hours!
- 1 ½ cups of unbleached white flour (you can replace this with the above, but the addition of some unbleached white makes for a better consistency)
- 1 cup of rolled oats
- 1 cup of bran flakes
- ¼ cup whole flax seeds (omit if you do not enjoy the flavor but I find that it adds a 'nutty' taste)
- ¼ to ½ cup of wheat germ (depends on taste preference)
- 2 ½ to 3 tsp of baking soda (depending on your elevation)
- 2 tsp of baking powder
- ½ tsp of salt (sea salt)
- 2–3 TBL of sugar (rapadura sugar is best)
- 1 ¾ to 2 ¼ cups of buttermilk, sour milk, half yogurt/half milk or milk with about 1 tbsp of apple cider vinegar added to it and let sit a while at room temperature

Directions

Once you get good at this you can prepare this bread in less than ten minutes or you could make up several batches of the dry ingredients only and store in glass jars or zip locks and just add the buttermilk when you are ready to bake it (makes a great present too for postpartum moms as it helps create an easy to pop in the oven bread).

1. Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees.
2. Place all dry ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Get your buttermilk option together, create a hole in the middle of the dry ingredients and pour the buttermilk in the hole. Gently stir wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until they're well mixed (but carefully as this is not a yeasted bread and my mother used to get on to me about being too hard on the bread).
3. Flour a work surface and knead the bread gently to form a ball. Flatten the ball (just a little) and cut an 'X' on the surface with a knife and bake on a lightly flour flat cookie sheet, round cast iron pan, or roll in 'loaf' style and place in an oiled and floured bread pan.
4. Place in a pre-heated oven for 10 minutes, and then turn down the oven to 325 degrees for another 40 minutes.
5. Take out of the oven and let the bread cool by leaning it up on its side.
6. Cut into quarters along the 'X,' slice and enjoy! If you cut it while it is still hot, it crumbles a little, but of course the warm bread and butter is worth it. Waiting until it is cool will ensure a bread that can be easily sliced with a sharp, serrated knife.

If bread is not consumed within 4 days, store in the refrigerator to prevent mold growth, especially in a hot and humid climate.