

CONSTIPATION IN PREGNANCY

Constipation describes the condition in which **bowel movements (poop)** become **infrequent** or **difficult**. Constipation is **very common during pregnancy (affects up to 2 in 5 pregnant people)** due to hormonal changes, lifestyle changes (less active), the iron in your prenatal supplement, diet changes, and anatomical changes that occur as your baby grows.

Constipation can occur in all trimesters and postpartum, but it is **most common during the third trimester**. There are both **lifestyle modifications** and **over-the-counter pharmacologic options** that can alleviate constipation.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Try **adding fibre to your diet** (aim for about 25g of fibre daily). Examples of good sources of fibre include:



bananas



apples



snow peas



lentils



whole grain pasta



berries

Plus, **stay hydrated** (10 x 8oz glasses/day), **move/exercise** regularly, and take **dried prunes** or **prune juice**.

PHARMACOLOGIC OPTIONS

Ask your health care provider for help if you feel uncomfortable going to the bathroom, as they can recommend over the counter medicines to help! Stool softeners, bulking agents or laxatives can be dissolved into a beverage and are safe during pregnancy. Ask your pharmacist to assist you in finding them.

Bulk-forming laxatives, such as
psyllium (e.g., **Metamucil**)

Polyethylene glycol 3350
(e.g., **MIRAlax**)

Saline laxatives, such as magnesium
hydroxide (e.g., **Dulcolax**)

Magnesium citrates, such as
bisacodyl (e.g., **Ducodyl**)



Note: Constipation can cause or **worsen hemorrhoids and anal fissures** (a small, painful cut in your rectum). **Talk to your health care provider if you are experiencing extremely painful or bloody stool.**

References

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. What can help with constipation during pregnancy [Internet]. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. 2020. Available from: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/experts-and-stories/ask-acog/what-can-help-with-constipation-during-pregnancy>
Trottier M, Erebara A, Bozzo P. Treating constipation during pregnancy. Can Fam Physician. 2012 Aug;58(8):836-8.

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