

Relieving Constipation Through Diet

Excerpted From *Listen To Your Colon:
The Complete Natural Healing Guide
For Constipation*

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www.ListenToYourGut.com

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THE ROLE OF DIET IN CONSTIPATION

Diet can play a big role in chronic constipation, but it is by no means the only factor that causes or contributes to constipation. As I say repeatedly throughout [Listen To Your Colon](#), You have to look at the totality of the variables that contribute to constipation, and then make the necessary changes in each area: Diet, stress and emotional factors, mineral deficiency, drug use, nutrient deficiency and gut microflora.

You may see an immediate alleviation of symptoms (i.e. you can poo) from just doing some of the short-term remedies, but for long-term healing, you have to address every factor causing imbalance in your digestive system and colon.

When it comes to mineral deficiency, low potassium can cause constipation. There is a constant outflow of potassium from the intestinal muscle cell to the outside of the cell. When blood potassium is low, more potassium leaves the cell. As more potassium flows out of the cell, it makes the cell more resistant to the transmission of current across its membrane and therefore, less likely to contract and move stool efficiently.

Low magnesium levels can also cause constipation by interfering with peristalsis – the colon has a muscular wall and without adequate magnesium all muscles are prone to cramping and spasming, including the intestines. So make sure you are getting enough potassium and magnesium. Forty percent of Americans are deficient in magnesium, so it is likely you need to supplement with magnesium citrate in addition to a healthy diet.

For now, let's just look at dietary factors that cause or contribute to constipation and how you can adjust your diet to facilitate healthy digestion and elimination. The hidden benefit to these guidelines is that not only will your bowel health and function improve, but you will see noticeable results in many areas of your body as you implement these dietary changes.

FOODS THAT WORSEN CONSTIPATION

The following foods are generally recognized as causing or worsening constipation:

- **Unhealthy fats** – food that is deep-fried in commercial vegetable oil, or prepared with unhealthy oils (hydrogenated vegetable oils, margarine, regular mayonnaise, denatured oils). Do not eat these unhealthy fats at all. See below for a list and description of good, healthy fats.
- **Too high a proportion of meat** in the diet (especially beef and pork) – a good way to reduce excessive meat intake is to make sure your plate contains 2/3 non-starchy vegetables and only 1/3 meat and/or starch (rice, potatoes, bread). There's nothing wrong with meat. Meat has been a vital food for humans for millions of years. Problems arise when the body does not get enough good fats and non-starchy vegetables as well.
- **Pasteurized cheese and other pasteurized dairy foods** – once breast milk is heated past body temperature, the good bacteria and enzymes that aid digestion are killed and the protein is denatured. If it is homogenized, the fat is denatured and harmful to the arteries. It is now a toxic food and should not be consumed – this holds true for all mammalian milk, whether it is human, goat or cow breast milk. Raw (unpasteurized) dairy products, however, are fine and usually beneficial. To find a supplier of raw dairy products in your area, go to: www.realmilk.com
- **Too high a proportion of starchy foods** in the diet; especially potatoes, bread, rice and corn. Follow the same rule above: make 2/3 of your plate non-starchy vegetables (see sections below for a list of these). For the other 1/3, you can choose between meat and starch.
- **High-sugar foods** – sugar is unhealthy for the body in so many ways and bowel health is certainly one of them. Use maple syrup, sucanat (unrefined sugar cane),

or raw (unpasteurized) honey whenever you need sweetness. Stevia is an ideal natural sweetener to replace sugar. And save your refined sugar for when it counts. If you eliminate sugar as much as possible, then you can really enjoy that occasional chocolate bar or piece of cake when you do have it.

Many of these may be things you've already noticed affecting your body negatively. Nevertheless, keep in mind that everyone's body is different and there may be things that I advise you not to eat that you can actually tolerate quite well. Our bodies are unique, finely tuned composites embodying all the complexity and variety of who we are. No one else's body is going to be or function exactly like yours. So, at all times, keep your own body as your final authority and decision-maker in what's right or not right for you.

Keeping a food diary in which you write down exactly what you eat and drink, when, how much, and how you felt at the time will be very helpful in customizing your diet to your body's exact tolerances. At the end of the day, evaluate what you ate and your reactions, if any. Describe the type, consistency, and number of bowel movements. Write down any other observations regarding gas, pain, bloating, cramping, etc. Also, very important is to note your emotional state and any unpleasant or stressful situations, thoughts, or feelings that occurred.

Remember that mind/body/spirit is one, and food is not the only factor that influences your digestive system. (For a terrific primer on this mind/body/spirit relationship, refer to the teleseminar I conducted with Dr. Gabor Mate, author of the book, *When the Body Says No*. The teleseminar recording and transcript is available at:

www.LTYGshoppe.com

Keeping a food diary will also help you to determine what proportion of fat to protein to starchy carbohydrates works best for you and to identify tolerance thresholds. For instance, you might be fine with an ounce of cheese once or twice a week, but have problems if you eat it in higher quantities, or more often.

Gluten Sensitivity

People with a sensitivity to the gliadin or gluten protein in wheat, barley, and rye can experience alternating constipation and diarrhea, along with varying degrees of intestinal inflammation, weakened immunity, and chronic headaches. These symptoms can be relatively mild, but still caused by celiac disease or gluten intolerance.

When the problem is celiac disease, the answer is eliminating ALL gluten from the diet. If you are simply *sensitive* to gluten, you can try reducing it; eliminate it completely for two weeks and then gradually reintroduce it to your diet, whilst keeping a diary to help you identify your tolerance level.

Wheat is such a common allergen that it's worth trial-testing the removal of gluten from your diet if you suffer from any digestive disturbance, including chronic constipation. Gluten is included in a mind-numbing array of products, so you must read labels (including supplement and medication labels) very carefully to ensure that you're removing all gluten. Alternatively, you could start by just removing wheat from your diet, as this is often the sole culprit, and see if that alone brings you relief.

It's actually easier than you think to switch to bread (or flour for baking) made with spelt or kamut. Although both are members of the wheat family, they are "ancient" varieties of wheat and often much better tolerated than modern varieties. Both are also considered to be of higher nutritional value than any modern wheat flour, but they are not gluten-free.

Completely gluten-free flours include potato, rice, arrowroot, buckwheat, etc. Gluten intolerance is now so common that there are literally thousands of really good gluten-free recipes on the internet – just do a Google search.

FOODS THAT RELIEVE CONSTIPATION

Following the food guidelines below, combined with the therapeutic protocols given in this book, should ensure the long-term health and normal functioning of your bowel. It's

best if you can get your whole family eating this way as well, since gut disorders are reaching epidemic levels in the western world and there's no one who wouldn't benefit from changing their diet according to these guidelines.

Good Fats Are Vital

Foods that are high in unhealthy fat can be problematic for either constipation or diarrhea because fats are a particular stimulus to the gastrocolic reflex. If fats aggravate your constipation, it is probably because you are eating too much unhealthy or bad fat, which causes your colon to spasm or "seize up", resulting in very slow movement of food through it.

Keep in mind that fat is a necessary nutrient; what you're looking for is your own tolerance threshold and to make sure you're consuming only good fats: Cold-pressed, organic extra-virgin olive oil, unrefined coconut oil and organic (preferably raw, unpasteurized) butter are the best fats for cooking and eating. Cold-pressed hemp, flax, sunflower or sesame oil are good when eaten cold or used in salad dressings, etc.

Animal fat (lard, tallow, or fat with the meat) is also beneficial for intestinal function, but make sure it is only from organic, pasture-fed animals. Otherwise the fat will not be healthy for you to consume, as it will contain too many toxins, hormones, etc. Fish oils from a reliable source are also good, (see www.LTYGshoppe.com for brands) especially cod liver oil – aim to consume 4 capsules or 1 teaspoon per day.

The great thing about increasing the good fats in your diet is that your entire body health and function will improve. Brain function, skin, hair, connective tissue, joints, hormonal balance, etc. will all greatly improve when you start ingesting enough good fats. Many holistic health experts recommend you consume up to 40% of your daily calories in the form of *good* fats and this is what my family aims for. The cell membrane is 40% fat, so that alone tells you how crucial good, usable fat is to our bodies.

Note that I said you should get 40% of your daily calories from fat – so obviously, as you increase your good fats, you will need to decrease calories consumed from other sources.

An easy way to get enough healthy fat, is to consume 1/4 lb of butter per day (for adults) in a variety of ways: Spread it super thick on cooled toast, muffins, etc., cook/fry with it, toss it with hot vegetables, pour it on popcorn, scramble your eggs in a big dollop of it, spread extra on your sandwiches or grill them with a ton of butter on the outside of the bread, fry up onions or a veggie hash in masses of melted butter.

See my video on Good Fats for more ideas on how to work butter and other healthy fats into your diet:

How To Get More Healthy Fats In Your Diet



Note: Click on this link or enter it into your web browser to watch this video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EvEf1Oc0IXk>

Do not use commercial vegetable oils like canola and other hydrogenated (heat-extracted) oils, or regular mayonnaise, or margarine. Margarine or butter substitutes are often treated with chemical solvents and bleaches, resulting in deformed, highly toxic, trans-fatty acids.

Even the cold-pressed margarines are not good, as your body doesn't need so much of those types of oils, and they prevent you from using butter – which you need a lot of.

You can eat as much mayonnaise as you want; if you eat a mayonnaise made from healthy, cold-pressed oils (like olive or sunflower oil). The best way to ensure a fresh, non-rancid, cold-pressed mayonnaise made of healthy oils, is to make your own. I have a great mixed healthy oils mayonnaise recipe on my blog – just type "mayonnaise" into the search box: www.blog.listentoyourgut.com

A sufficient (i.e. high) daily intake of good, natural fats is absolutely crucial to eliminating your constipation problem. The fact that 40% of the cell membrane is composed of fat, shows you how vital it is to get enough of this nutrient, in forms your body can absorb and utilize. You will also benefit the rest of your body by following these guidelines and you'll see improvement after a few months in your skin, hair, joints and energy levels.

The dietary changes in this book that will have the most pronounced positive effect on your constipation are to greatly increase your good fat intake, and to ingest a sufficient amount of green vegetables per day (more on this below).

Soluble and Insoluble Fiber

It's also a good idea to make sure your diet contains sufficient insoluble and soluble fiber. Personally, my gut feeling (and experience) is that non-starchy vegetables and leafy greens (with dressings made from good fats, or cooked with lots of butter slathered on) are the most beneficial of the fiber foods. Important to note is that you must also make sure you drink sufficient fluids, or fiber can worsen constipation.

Insoluble fiber helps to add bulk to the stool. Foods high in insoluble fiber include:

- Whole-wheat and the wheat-family breads and cereals
- Rye, rice, barley, most other grains
- Cabbage
- Beets
- Carrots

- Brussels sprouts
- Turnips
- Cauliflower
- Apple skin
- Celery

Of this list, try to ingest mostly the vegetables on it and a minimal amount of the grains.

Soluble fiber, as its name indicates, dissolves in water forming a gelatinous substance in the bowel. Soluble fiber can be metabolized by gas-forming bacteria in the colon, which can lead to discomfort or flatulence. This can be minimized by gradually introducing and increasing soluble fiber into the diet. Foods high in soluble fiber include:

- Oats
- Ground flaxseed (must be freshly ground for best nutritional value and to avoid rancidity)
- Beans
- Peas
- Barley
- Citrus fruits
- Strawberries
- Apple pulp

Consuming adequate soluble and insoluble fiber helps to add bulk to your stool, so that it can pass easily through your colon and rectum. But again, if you are not simultaneously drinking enough liquids, then this fiber will make your stools too hard to pass easily, so make sure you're drinking 8 to 10 glasses of water, diluted fruit juice, herbal tea, green tea, rooibos, honeybush, or white tea per day. If you have difficulty drinking straight water, then make a big pitcher of one of these recommended teas (sweeten with stevia or a little honey, if you wish) and drink that throughout the day.

When you think about the vegetable/plant portion of your diet, you basically want to focus on non-starchy vegetables and minimize the starchy foods and vegetables in your diet – since your body has shown it doesn't like them so much.

Common Starchy Foods (Minimize)

Corn
Potatoes
Sweet potatoes
Rice
Bread
Cous-cous
Pasta

Non-Starchy Vegetables (Eat lots and raw is good!)

Lettuce
Cabbage
Kale
Spinach
Chard
Bok choy
Collard greens
Celery
Fennel
Peas
Carrots
Zucchini
Green or yellow beans
Asparagus
Sweet peppers
Tomatoes
Avocado (I know this is technically a fruit, but it's great because of the good fat in it)

Squash – acorn, butternut, summer, etc.

Artichokes and sunchokes

Onions

Brussel sprouts

Broccoli

Cauliflower

Use this list for inspiration before grocery shopping or when you're trying to figure out what to eat. Try to eat seasonally, according to what's being grown locally. A great recipe book that will show you new and tasty ways to prepare these vegetables is, *Vegetarian Cooking For Everyone* By Deborah Madison.

Leafy green vegetables (romaine lettuce, chard, kale, spinach, collard greens, etc.) are very beneficial in eliminating constipation. Ideal consumption of green, leafy vegetables is five handfuls per day. However, even if you just manage to have a salad twice per day (use darker green lettuce), you'll see an improvement.

If you don't really like vegetables, and find it hard to eat them, an easy trick is to smother them in pre-made sauces. Any vegetable slathered in butter, salt and pepper instantly tastes better. You can also try drizzling different salad dressings and marinades on your veggies or greens; the Asian-inspired ones (like sesame ginger, or miso ginger) usually work well.

Likewise, Mediterranean dips like hummus, tsatziki or just good old sour cream with salt and pepper sprinkled on, can completely transform a previously boring vegetable. This also does not require any extra work, since you can buy all these items ready-to-go from your local organic grocery store.

Now, if you really don't like leafy, green vegetables, or you just don't want to take the time to prepare them, then an alternative is to take a mixed greens product in powder form. You can either mix 2 teaspoons with half orange juice and half water in a thermos (or something with a lid) or shake well, or mix it in a glass with a hand-held blender, or add it to your smoothies.

If you can do this once or twice per day along with increasing your daily intake of good fats, then these are the best two dietary changes you can make. Depending on how fussy your child is, you may be able to sneak a teaspoon (or even half a teaspoon) into their juice or smoothie, so this is also an easy way to get greens into a child.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE DIET

To keep yourself healthy and maintain good bowel health on an ongoing basis, make the following dietary guidelines your normal, regular diet. In fact, everyone in your family should follow these guidelines:

- No processed, pre-packaged foods.

- No foods containing preservatives, nitrates and nitrites (these have actually been banned by the FDA, as they are so carcinogenic to the gut, but the meat industry refused to comply and so they are still in all your commercial hot dogs and deli meats), monosodium glutamate (MSG - it interferes with neural functioning), carrageenan (large quantities have been used to induce ulcerative colitis in guinea pigs and primates), or anything else that sounds like a manufactured chemical compound.

- No margarine or butter substitutes – often treated with chemical solvents and bleaches, resulting in deformed, highly toxic, trans-fatty acids. Even the cold-pressed margarines are not good as your body doesn't need so much of those oils, and they prevent you from using butter – which your body needs a lot of.

Use real butter (preferably made from raw, organic milk), cold-pressed virgin olive oil, or unrefined coconut oil instead. Do not use regular mayonnaise either – only mayonnaise made from cold-pressed oils.

- No artificial sweeteners of any kind (like aspartame, Nutrasweet, saccharine, Splenda, sucralose, acesulfame-K, etc.) – these are toxic and proven to cause

memory loss, can also be highly addictive and contribute to hyperactivity and seizures in some people.

- No artificial colors or flavors - especially since the introduction of neural flavor blockers and enhancers.
- No pasteurized milk products; milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, etc. Raw milk products are okay and actually promote health, but pasteurized or ultra heat-treated (UHT) dairy products must be strictly avoided. For more info on the health benefits of raw milk, see Issue #1 of my infoletter, *Good Health Is Real Wealth*: www.LTYGshoppe.com or, for benefits and to find a supplier in your area: www.realmilk.com

The best dietary changes you can make to relieve constipation are:

- Hugely increase your intake of good fats; organic butter, cold-pressed organic olive oil, unrefined organic coconut oil, fish oil
- Increase your intake of non-starchy and leafy green vegetables: follow the pie-wedge rule: 2/3 of your plate should be non-starchy veggies and only 1/3 of your plate meat or starches.

Note From Jini Patel Thompson: This is only a small excerpt of the powerful healing knowledge and tools contained in [Listen To Your Colon](#). Hopefully, you can already see from the excerpt above, that this is unlike any other book you have read on healing constipation. This is because I don't write a book about healing a condition, unless I have lived through it myself. That's why I'm able to give people not only in-depth understanding of a disorder, but the fastest way to heal it! Like you, I want to heal my body as quickly and as comprehensively as I can. You can read more about this book, or purchase it at: www.HealConstipation.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former journalist, Jini Patel Thompson is an internationally recognized expert on natural healing for colitis, Crohn's, diverticulitis and IBS. Her books have sold in over 40 countries. She has appeared repeatedly on radio and TV shows giving hope to those suffering from gastrointestinal disease. Jini is a popular speaker at natural health-related conferences, and her health articles have been published in magazines and journals in the U.S, Australia and the U.K., and on the Internet worldwide.

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