

Increasing fiber in the diet
to keep you regular!

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Constipation and Parkinson's Disease

- ❖ Constipation is a common side effect of PD

Causes?

- ❖ Maybe related to the changes in the nerve cells in the spinal cord and in the intestinal walls – similar to the changes occurring in the brain. These changes may slow down the transit of food through the GI tract
- ❖ Medications: anticholinergics like Amantadine
- ❖ Changes in diet and or fluid intake may effect regularity
- ❖ Decreased physical activity
- ❖ Aging....

Dietary Changes to prevent/treat constipation

#1. Increasing dietary fiber in the diet!

Fiber is only found in plants (fruits and vegetables).

Fiber is the part of the cell wall that we cannot digest.

Fiber increases “bulk” of the stool, this triggers the muscles to contract.



Types of Fiber

- Insoluble – twigs and bark.
- Insoluble – creates a “gel” in the intestine

Increasing both types of fiber in the diet is great!
Insoluble fiber has heart protecting properties by potentially decreasing cholesterol.

How much fiber do we need?

Recommended intake/day:

Men = 38 grams

Women = 25 grams

The majority of Americans consume <15 grams/day!

Diets low in fiber are more frequently higher in processed foods, high fat foods, and foods that are low in nutrients



How to increase fiber in the diet

- Remember – fiber is found in plants – so having a more plant based diet, limiting processed foods, will increase fiber intake
- Foods high in fiber: BEANS! Berries - raspberries, nuts, seeds, whole grain breads (see the grains!) fruits – with the skin please! Whole wheat pastas, or plant based pastas
- Read labels to find higher fiber choices



Don't forget....

- If you are going to attempt to increase dietary fiber – do it gradually! Increasing fiber too quickly can cause bloating, gas, distention and even – constipation!
- If you are going to increase fiber – you will need to ensure adequate fluid intake. Part of regular bowel movements is adequate hydration!
- Increase physical activity which can increase transit time of food through the GI tract



Medications

- Fiber supplements – similarly with increasing fiber in the diet, adding a fiber supplement requires adequate fluid intake.
- Osmotic laxative: MiraLAX – pulls water into the lower intestines to add bulk and soften stools
- Stimulant laxatives: Senna, Dulcolax (bisacodyl) stimulate the intestines to contract
- Stool softeners: Colace

Always consult with your physician or pharmacist when starting a new medication or supplement



Resources

- Parkinson's Disease Foundation
- Eatright.org – Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Questions?