

There are many causes of constipation including:

- insufficient daily fluids
- a low fibre intake
- irregular meals or insufficient food
- decreased physical activity
- some medications.

The following guidelines may help relieve or prevent constipation.

### **1. Include more fibre** in your diet.

Fibre is found in fruit, vegetables, breads and cereals. The following foods are good sources:

- wholemeal and mixed grain bread
- porridge, weetbix, muesli and other bran cereals
- vegetables (skin on where appropriate) e.g. peas, corn
- legumes e.g. dried beans (including baked beans), lentils, split peas
- raw fruit (skin on where appropriate), dried fruit e.g. prunes, apricots, raisins, and canned/stewed fruit

### **Increase the amount of fibre in your diet gradually, not all at once.**

### **2. Drink plenty of fluids, at least 8 cups per day.**

Water is an excellent choice but also diluted fruit juice, soup, tea, coffee or low fat milk. Fibre absorbs fluid, creating the bulk that is needed to assist with normal bowel function.

**3. Cooking bran** can be added to foods such as cereal or yoghurt. Start with two teaspoons and gradually increase to two tablespoons.

However, **eating more than two tablespoons per day is not advisable.** It is also important to have plenty of fluid at meals that include added bran

**2. Eat three meals a day** at regular times and always include breakfast.

**3. Kiwi fruit** and **prunes** have a natural laxative effect and you may find it useful to include them in your diet.

**4. Have regular physical activity** e.g. walking, gardening, swimming.

**5. Continue to eat a variety** of foods from the **four food groups** each day:

- choose at least **6** servings of breads and cereals (at least **4** servings should be wholemeal/wholegrain)
- choose at least **5** servings of vegetables and fruit
- choose **2** servings of milk and milk products
- choose **1-2** servings of meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dried beans/lentils

For more information on healthy eating and food servings ask for a Ministry of Health food and nutrition pamphlet e.g. "Healthy Eating for Adult New Zealanders".