



# Kidney Q&A

0-3 months

Life Options Rehabilitation Program

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## Q: What can I do about constipation?

**A:** When you have kidney failure, constipation can be more common, because:

- Fluid limits can lead to dry stools.
- Many high-fiber foods are also high in potassium (fiber helps food move through the bowels).
- Some drugs have constipation as a side effect.

Constipation can be painful, and it can cause other problems. If you are on peritoneal dialysis (PD) and your bowels are not moving, the PD fluid may cause pain on fill or drain, or cause the catheter to move.

Some things that can help constipation—*with a doctor's okay*—are:

- Psyllium husk, found in Metamucil® (with 1/2 glass water)
- Mineral oil
- Just one prune per day (43 mg. of potassium)
- Glycerine suppositories
- Exercise to get the bowels moving
- Over-the-counter or prescription stool softeners or laxatives, such as Miralax®.

Be sure your doctor approves any over-the-counter products you want to try. Some have ingredients that can build up to harmful levels in people with kidney failure.

### What *I* can do to fight constipation:

- Tell my nurse, dietitian, or doctor about the problem and ask for help. They may be able to suggest some natural remedies that are safe.
- Ask my dietitian or doctor if I can try the ideas on this fact sheet.
- Ask what foods I can eat that have fiber in them.
- Ask what exercises I can do safely, and work up to 30 minutes of exercise a day (start with 5 minutes a day).
- Ask what drugs might be making this worse and if I need to take them.