

Constipation

Constipation is one of the most common gastrointestinal issues and is defined by having three or fewer bowel movements in a week apart from dry or hard stools.

In most cases, constipation is a temporary issue that resolves on its own. For many patients, however, chronic constipation may have other underlying issues that need to be identified and treated in time.

Scheduling an appointment with our expert colorectal surgeon at Huntington Colorectal Surgeons is the best way to get quick and permanent relief from the condition.

Causes of constipation

Constipation can be caused by many factors that range from simple to more complex ones.

One of the most common causes is a lack of dietary fiber. High fiber foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seeds, and nuts offer bulk and soften the stools that are then easier to pass. Without fiber, stools become hard and dry and are difficult to pass, leading to constipation. Physical inactivity is also another common factor that causes constipation.

Certain medications, including opioid painkillers, antidepressants, antacids, and blood pressure-lowering medications, may cause constipation in some people.

Other serious causes include

Blockages in the colon or rectum caused by any of the following:

- Anal fissures
- Hernias
- Bowel obstructions
- Strictures or narrowing of the bowel
- Colon cancer
- Rectal cancer
- Irritable bowel syndrome

Other factors include neurological issues, problems with pelvic floor muscles or weakened pelvic muscles, hormonal conditions such as hypothyroidism, or other eating disorders.

Is constipation serious?

Occasional constipation that resolves in a couple of days is usually not serious. Some preventive measures such as eating a high fiber diet, exercising regularly, and staying hydrated can help address constipation.

However, it is important to schedule an appointment at Huntington Colorectal Surgery if you have fewer than three bowel movements in a week and experience symptoms such as:

- Bleeding in the stool or from your rectum
- Constant abdominal or rectal pain
- Inability to pass flatus
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Low back pain
- Unintentional and steady weight loss
- Fatigue or weakness

Chronic, untreated constipation can cause some complications such as hemorrhoids, anal fissures, fecal impaction (hardened stool accumulates in the intestine), or rectal prolapse (a part of the intestine or rectum protrudes from the anus).

The best constipation treatments at Huntington Colorectal Surgeons

When constipation symptoms do not resolve within a week, it is important to book an appointment with Dr. Kaufman, the internationally reputed colorectal surgeon. While he discusses the full medical and medication history, he performs a thorough physical exam and digital rectal exam. He may order diagnostics such as an imaging study or perform a colonoscopy to detect underlying causes of constipation such as tumors, obstructions, inflammation, or infection. Tests to determine the function of intestinal or anal muscles may also be performed.

As the leading colorectal specialist in San Gabriel Valley, Dr. Kaufman uses precise diagnostics along with his extensive knowledge and experience to identify the root cause of constipation. When the cause is related to lifestyle and dietary habits, the doctor counsels and provides dietary and lifestyle modification guidelines. For some patients, he may prescribe fiber supplements to resolve the issue. For serious causes such as obstruction or tumors, the surgeon may recommend surgery after determining your candidacy.

Schedule a consultation with Dr. Kaufman to experience quick and effective relief from chronic constipation.