

Constipation

Be Well, Massage Magazine

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Introduction

It's a common problem most people ignore, yet most Americans are not aware of just how irregular their bowel habits are. One should have a bowel movement after every major meal, which equates to 2 – 3 per day. Irregular elimination is easy to treat but over a period of time a chronic condition can lead to a slow poisoning of the body. Multiple problems can be traced back to uneliminated waste material putrefying in the large intestine where fermentation and toxins are produced and reabsorbed. Early signs of a toxic colon include headaches, digestive disorders, fatigue, skin problems, joint aches and pains, allergies, hemorrhoids, obesity, liver problems, abnormal blood pressure and even insomnia.

One of the causes of a sluggish bowel is nervous tension. We know that psychological well-being is deeply connected to our gastro-intestinal health. Research has shown that patients with chronic constipation have higher rates of anxiety and depression and may be related to psycho-emotional issues. A diet consistently low in fiber, dehydration, and a sedentary lifestyle are also causative factors.

In recent years, constipation has been increasingly related to the overuse of laxatives. Lazy bowel syndrome is when the body loses its natural ability to regulate the passage of stools. Even herbal laxatives, such as cascara sagrada and senna, can have a negative effect if used too frequently or over a long period of time since they work by

irritating the colon. Some chemical laxatives reduce your potassium levels and can cause dependency. Therefore it is recommended that laxatives be used on an occasional basis only. Keeping your colon and body healthy can be easily remedied with a few minor lifestyle and dietary adjustments.

Holistic Solutions

Since ancient times food, massage, and sweat cures were used to eliminate toxins and waste from the body. Springtime was a traditional time to cleanse the body and clean the colon. Our European ancestors did this routinely by taking herbal bitter tonics, eating spring greens found in the fields, getting more exercise and eating lighter meals. It is estimated that you lose as much as 1 – 1.5 liters of fluid daily from respiration, perspiration and elimination, so you need to replenish this amount just to break even. However, if you are trying to cleanse or detoxify, you should increase your hydration even more.

According to Oriental medicine, the lungs and the large intestine have a strong relationship. By taking deep breaths, you automatically relax the abdomen, but also effect the large intestine via the lungs. So by periodically deep breathing throughout the day can be helpful not only in diminishing your stress levels, but also in supporting your colon function.

Fiber is your best insurance to keep bowels in good working order. Vegetable fiber is basically indigestible matter which contains cellulose, lignin and pectin. The best fiber choices include psyllium, ground flax seed, wheat germ and bran, but remember to introduce them into your diet slowly to prevent the formation of gas. Uncooked fruits and

vegetables are very beneficial due to their fiber and high water content, and whole grains, nuts and seeds aid digestion. Raw plant foods are a great source of vitamins, mineral salts, potent enzymes and many contain natural antibiotics. Examples are soaked nuts, seeds and grains, fruits and vegetables, sprouts and seaweed. Three or four prunes or figs soaked in warm water over night and taken the next day can work wonders. Also tamarind, rhubarb and the notorious apple-a-day helps too!

Since dehydration is the most common cause of constipation, a laxative tea provides both fluid and gentle stimulation. Drink more liquids such as mineral and purified water, diluted fruit and vegetable juices, broths, aloe vera and wheatgrass juices. Some herbs that are helpful in alleviating constipation are ginger, fennel, licorice, marshmallow root, peppermint, rhubarb root and slippery elm. Try the following herbal tea recipe for occasional constipation.

Gentle Laxative Tea

1 cup boiling water

2 thin slices of fresh ginger root

1/4 teaspoon ground fennel seed

1/4 teaspoon dried or fresh peppermint

1/2 teaspoon ground licorice root

Honey or Xylitol (made from Birch trees) to sweeten

Pour the boiling water over the herbs and allow to steep for 5 to 10 minutes. Strain and drink warm.

Peristalsis, the wave-like contractions of the intestinal walls that support the movement of material through the bowels, can be promoted by the daily application of self massage. Massage in general helps eliminate stress and aid in relaxing the body, however intestinal massage will additionally encourage proper elimination. Massage the lower abdomen and sacrum area in a clockwise direction on a daily basis to stimulate sluggish bowels. While applying the warm massage oil to your abdomen, do several slow deep breaths to increase the benefits.

Colon Enlightenment

12 drops Lavender essential oil

7 drops Rosemary essential oil

5 drops Fennel essential oil

2 Tablespoons vegetable, nut or seed oil

In a small amber bottle, mix the essential oils with the carrier oil. Cap securely and shake to mix. Label.

Exercise helps all areas of the body to perform better, especially the large intestines. A brisk daily walk, yoga, trampolining and dancing are all good options to consider. Dry skin brushing which is highly effective for moving lymph fluid, and promoting good circulation, is another good practice to adopt regularly as well as taking Epsom salt baths to aid in relaxation and detoxification.

Conclusion

Explore the possibility of a metaphysical correlation such as refusing to let go of the past, and holding onto old ideas or beliefs that no longer serve you. Ask yourself if you are fully allowing life to flow through you. You will experience numerous benefits to having regular elimination such as a more positive attitude, better posture, easier breathing and clearer skin. A few changes, as simple as increasing your fluid intake and eating more raw plant foods, is all it takes to keep your colon healthy and you, happy. Be well.