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An Uncomfortable Day

Anne is a beautiful thirty-year-old working woman. The past few weeks had been terrible for her due to an agonising discomfort in her tummy. She grew increasingly irritated and restless. She was quite beside herself with wonder, as she always prided herself as an emotionally well-balanced woman.

Finally she decided to throw in the towel and meet her holistic physician to find what was actually troubling her. She was surprised to learn that her issue was indeed extremely natural and basic. Anne was severely constipated.

It was a relief for Anne to know that her discomfort could be effectively managed with simple remedies - diet and exercise. She was back to her enthusiastic bouncy self within a few weeks. Anne is not alone! Unattended constipation or abnormal bowel movements is a very real problem in modern times. Young executives fall prey to this bane owing to their high-flying careers and out of work hours. It can be attributed to poor eating habits and an incorrect lifestyle.



Is My Bowel Normal?

Normality is a very relative expression! What's "normal" varies from person to person. Some people go to the toilet thrice a day; others, thrice a week. Ayurveda considers eliminating waste from the body daily as a sign of a healthy individual. Conventional practice considers constipation as having fewer than three bowel movements per week, which is still debatable. Bowel movement less than once a week is categorised as "severe". The importance of eliminating waste from the body, its quality and quantity are great clinical pointers, which were used by physicians since ancient times. Ayurvedic interpretations of bowel changes are very comprehensive and it is an integral part of any treatment. A normal stool will be floating, even shaped and continuous. Inability to evacuate the bowels at least once a day is "constipation" in Ayurveda it needs to be holistically taken care of.

What Makes Me Constipated?

Poor Lifestyle is a major precipitating factor for most of modern day medical conditions. Physical inactivity can make constipation a chronic phenomenon. Late office hours, incorrect sleeping patterns, hurry and rush throughout the day, sitting continuously cooped up in office chairs, battling chock-a-bloc traffic contribute to physical and mental stress which triggers constipation.





A diet that is very dry and devoid of fibrous content is the main cause of constipation in a general population, in a modern society. The colon plays a very important role in digesting food and creating the end product. The constitution of good food varies from person to person. Prolonged “Diet Programs” for weight loss and body building creates irreversible damages to the colon activity in the long term.

Colon responds to various foods based on the energy it possesses. Food combination of high quantities of animal proteins, less water and refined materials are known causes for highly dry and hard stools. It not only ends up in constipation but also triggers inflammatory changes in the colon.

Modern day tasty food, mostly flaunted as fast food, is an amalgam of excessively salted, processed condiments and additives, artificial sauces, refined and baked products. These have long term ill effects on digestive systems as a whole. This specifically affects the inner part of the stomach, functions of the liver and colonic part of digestion. As the refining process is enhanced, the issue it creates to a healthy constitution also becomes enhanced. Correct proportion, type of meal, timing and healing food specific to your body can address or prevent colon catastrophes on long run.

The human digestive system is a complex series of organs, blood vessels, hormones, involuntary muscles and glands that processes, digests and evacuates food. Hence the action of digestion, particularly stomach and colon are dependent on the emotional state of mind. Appetite, digestive stimulation, orderly and peaceful eating habits are critical parts of the health of the digestive system too. The most common habit of holding the urge to evacuate the bowel is also considered as a root cause of chronic digestive issues, at least in some. Ayurveda repeatedly reminds the need of timely and urge based evacuation of all nature calls.

Though constipation itself is not considered as a disease, it may be a significant sign of forthcoming disorders of the colon. A timely evaluation is always recommended.

Common Causes:

- *Dry, fried, spicy, salty food*
- *White flour*
- *Baked and refined foods*
- *Prolonged sitting*
- *Inactivity*
- *Physical and emotional stress*
- *Lack of sleep or untimely sleep*
- *Contineous stress of any sort*
- *Long journey*
- *Condition like pregnancy*



- *Laxative dependency*
- *Medications for pain, depression, hyper tension, iron supplements*

Hidden Dangers in Constipation

Constipation is not a symptom to be neglected or suppressed if persistent for long time. An appropriate evaluation is needed in time. Most of the causes of constipation can be addressed naturally and holistically. A change in bowel habit may signify specific or overall ill health of individuals. Chronic constipation can also be a signal to problems like poorly functioning thyroid gland, irritable bowel syndrome or diabetes. It can also be a side effect of the medications of depression, blood pressure or supplements. In rare cases, it can signal illnesses such as colorectal cancer or autoimmune disease. Blood in stools, black stools, excessive pain, mucus in the stool and bump/growth of any kind in the rectum are situations, which may require an expert evaluation. Chronic constipation in an individual above age of 40 years and in individuals with family history of colon carcinoma should also be subjected to a periodic evaluation. In Holistic care, it is a very basic step towards prevention of diseases to observe and take special comprehensive care of the colon.

Medicines and Laxative Abuse

Over-the-counter laxatives are commonly used for relief. Sometimes, the ease of availability and use of the drug lead people to form a habit. The dangers of overuse and habituation are also linked to increased risk of colon cancers.

Some medications for pain, depression, hypertension and Parkinson's disease are associated with constipation. Calcium and Iron supplements also lead to constipation. Calcium supplements, when taken with other supplement or medication that binds with stool, lead to constipation in some individuals.

It is always better to leave the decision of the duration and support of medication for constipation to your physician.

Holistic Ayurvedic Care

According to Ayurveda, constipation is a result of deranged digestion and disturbed energy flow that result in increased dryness in the colon and faecal matter that obstruct the digestive tract. The obstruction of stool could also be due to a haemorrhoid or tumour in the intestine. This impairs the wind energy, which regulates the excretory process and ultimately results in constipation. The common method of approach in



treating constipation is to identify the real cause and work towards improving the colon motility and reduce the dryness.

As a general approach, a chronic non-complicated situation is treated with a mild laxative of rejuvenating herbs to ease the mobility in the lower part of the colon. Medications usually comprise of oil mixed herbs, powders and from time to time, just dietary modifications. A physician will advise on this after a thorough evaluation. Improving the digestive system as a whole is also a main aspect of the treatment of constipation. Parasite infection is also treated in susceptible patients with natural remedies. The long-term strategy will also involve correcting unhealthy eating habits and introducing exercises and specific yoga postures.

Exercise helps relieving constipation by considerably decreasing the time taken for food to move through the intestine. This limits the amount of water absorbed from the stool into the body by avoiding stagnation and resulting dryness. It becomes harder for the body to get rid of hard and dry stool. Good intestinal muscles that contract efficiently help to evacuate stool promptly.

Colon health also governs free energy flow through the Mooladara Chakra which is one of the seven primary chakras according to ancient Indian yoga sciences. The word of caution to youngsters of today is simple: get into action before constipation becomes chronic and affects your productivity by choosing organic choices of treatments.

Facts

- *If you are lactose intolerant, eating dairy can cause constipation*
- *Travel can change your daily routine and diet, contributing to constipation*
- *Depression may trigger constipation or make it worse*
- *Hormonal imbalances like Thyroid malfunction can cause constipation*
- *Ignoring the urge can cause or aggravate constipation by weakening the signals over time*
- *Exercise and good diet itself can ease your constipation to certain extent*

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Dr. Hafeel is licensed to practice Ayurveda in United Arab Emirates since 2003. At the Holistic Medical Centre, Dubai, Dr. Hafeel emphasises preventive care, healing and rejuvenation of individual health. With uncompromising clinical standards, he guides every health seeker to a customised diet, exercise and appropriate living regime, so as to restore balance of the body, mind and consciousness, thus preventing disease from gaining foothold in the system.

