

## **ADOPTION OF HEALTHY DIET AND YOGA FOR PREVENTION AND CURE OF CONSTIPATION: A REVIEW**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Constipation is a symptom rather than disease of lifestyle. Nearly everyone becomes constipated at one point or another. A person called constipated when his bowel movements are lower than normal. It is caused by lack of dietary fibre in the diet and inactivity. Dietary fibre may play an important role in the etiology of constipation. Good sources of fibres are whole grains such as wheat, Legumes such as kidney beans, fruits such as apples with skin, oranges, vegetables such as carrot, etc. Staying hydrated i.e. drinking enough water and other liquids is good for overall health and can help to avoid getting constipated. Avoid foods with little to no fibre such as chips, frozen meals, fast food. *Asanas* like *Matsyasana*, *Pavanmuktasana*, etc. is useful in Constipation to normalize the bowel movements. Lifestyle

changes i.e. proper healthy and fibrous diet also some yogic techniques play important role in prevention and treatment of Constipation.

**KEYWORDS:** Constipation, diet, fibre, yogic techniques.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Constipation refers to bowel movements that are infrequent or hard to pass. It is symptom not a disease. However, people may have other complaints as well including hard stools, straining with bowel movements, abdominal pain, bloating etc.

Causes of constipation are dehydration, lack of dietary fibres, physical inactivity, medication side effects. Around \$ 725 million is spent on laxative products each year in America. Complications from constipation may include haemorrhoids, anal fissure, intestinal obstruction, rectal prolapse. Medication includes laxatives, osmotic agent, stool softener or stool lubricant agent. Water absorption- the colon receives approximately 1.5 L of liquid effluent daily from the small intestine, with 200 mL to 400 mL excreted in the stool. The functions of the colon are to absorb fluid and transport waste to the rectum, where it is expelled or stored until defaecation is convenient. Removal of water from faecal slurry is time dependent and actively regulated, and can be substantially increased in dehydration states.

Some cases of constipation can be relieved by lifestyle changes. This includes proper fibre containing diet, Yogic postures, exercises etc. Physical activity can serve as a stimulus to bowel emptying.

## METHODOLOGY

Constipation is divided, with considerable overlap, into issues of stool consistency (hard, painful stools) and issues of stool defecatory behaviour (infrequency, difficulty in evacuation, straining during defecation).

### Causes

- 1) Lack of dietary fibre - Fibre promotes bowel movements & prevents constipation.
- 2) Physical inactivity- This is especially the case in older adults. Physical activity keeps the metabolism high, making the process in body happen more rapidly.
- 3) Medication side effects.  
Narcotic (opioid) pain drugs including codeine  
Antidepressants including amitriptyline.  
Anticonvulsants including Phenytoin, carbamazepine- iron supplements.  
Ca channel blockers- Diltiazem, Nifedipine  
Aluminium containing antacids including Amphojel  
Diuretics- Chlorothiazide.
- 4) Milk products
- 5) IBS
- 6) Pregnancy- Uterus may compress intestine. Slowing down the passage of food.
- 7) Ageing- As person gets older, the metabolism slows down.

- 8) Changes in routine- When a person travels.
- 9) Overuse of laxatives- laxatives can be habit forming.
- 10) Not going to toilet when needed.
- 11) Not drinking enough water.
- 12) Problems with colon or rectum
- 13) Hirschsprung disease (A birth defect in which some nerve cells are absent in large intestine) - People are susceptible to constipation.
- 14) Some diseases & conditions- Neurological disorders e.g. Parkinson's, stroke.

### Pathophysiology

Water absorption- the colon receives approximately 1.5 L of liquid effluent daily from the small intestine, with 200 mL to 400 mL excreted in the stool. The functions of the colon are to absorb fluid and transport waste to the rectum, where it is expelled or stored until defaecation is convenient. Removal of water from faecal slurry is time dependent and actively regulated, and can be substantially increased in dehydration states.

In Ayurveda it is referred to as *Anaha, koshta baddhata*. It is usually a *Vata* disorder, particularly if it is a long standing condition or in the elderly. It may also be due to *tikshna* and *ushna* gunas of pitta or *Guru, Picchila guna* of *Kapha*. Proper assimilation of food and elimination of faeces are important for maintaining health. Improper elimination from the colon causes retention of waste and morbid matter, which results in systemic poisoning or autointoxication.

Some cases of constipation can be relieved by lifestyle changes. This includes proper fibre containing diet, Yogic postures, exercises etc. Physical activity can serve as a stimulus to bowel emptying.

### ❖ ROLE OF DIET IN CONSTIPATION

Good sources of fibre are

- Whole grains, such as whole wheat, oatmeal.
- Legumes, such as lentils, black beans, kidney beans, soybeans.
- Fruits such as berries, apples with skin on, oranges & pears.
- Vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, green peas.

**The way fibre acts**

- Fibre strengthens the consistency to food which forces you to chew properly & break up the food.
- Fibre is, in general, non- digestible & will end up intact in the large intestine.
- Fibre absorbs water (Upto five times its weight) and expands as it passes through the bowel.
- In summary, fibre has a recognized role in regulating gastro-intestinal function, particularly in helping to prevent constipation.

**Foods avoid for constipation relief**

- Dairy products- Cheese, ice-cream
- Red meat, chips
- Frozen dinners
- Cookies, banana(raw), fried foods, alcohol.

**Role of water**

- Water transports nutrients in digestive system, the blood and inside cells.
- The organism needs water to eliminate waste in urine and faeces.
- The combination of water and fibre prevents constipation.

**❖ Role of yoga in constipation**

Yoga means union. Yoga is psycho-somatic-spiritual discipline for achieving union and harmony between mind, body and soul for a healthy living. Yoga is mind-body technique which involves relaxation, meditation and a set of physical exercises performed in sync with breathing. This can be achieved by systematic and disciplined practice of *Ashtanga Yoga* described by *Maharshi Patanjali*. The first two limbs of *Ashtanga Yoga* are Yama and Niyama which are ethical code and personal discipline. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> limbs are *Asana* and *Pranayama* which help in our physical development and improvement of physiological functions. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> limbs are *Pratyahara* and *Dharana* for controlling senses and making our mind one-pointed, calm and alert. The final two limbs are *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* result in inner peace.

Yoga stands out as one of the best types of exercise for treating constipation. Yoga is a great way to keep the digestive tract moving and prevent constipation.

Yoga relieves constipation by working in two different ways

- First, it helps to reduce stress. This is important because stress is a major contributor to constipation.
- And second, many yoga poses also work by increasing blood flow, massaging the digestive tract and pushing things along through the system so that the body is able to form healthy bowel movements and prevent constipation. The twisting motions in many yoga are especially helpful for promoting elimination, plus relieving tension and support detoxification.

**The following *Asanas* are useful in Constipation**

**1. *MAYURASANA* (Peacock pose)**

Improve digestion

Destroy effects of unwholesome food

Increase intra- abdominal pressure

Reduce spleen and liver enlargement

**2. *ARDHA-MATSYENDRASANA* (Sitting half spinal twist pose)**

Stimulate the pancreas, liver, spleen, kidneys, stomach and ascending and descending colons.

**3. *HALASANA* (Plough pose)**

This posture provides comfort to the liver and intestine

Increases blood circulation in the pelvic area and boosts digestion

**4. *PAVANMUKTASANA* (Wind- Relieving pose)**

Releases gas

Relieves acid reflux

**5. *BADDHA KONASANA* (Butterfly pose)**

Relieves gas, bloating, cramping

Reduces stress

**6. *SHASHANKASANA* (Child Pose)**

Relieves gas, bloating, cramping

Reduces stress

## 7. PASCHIMOTTANASANA

Stimulate the pancreas, liver, spleen, kidneys, stomach and ascending and descending colons.

## DISCUSSION

Diet and Yoga exercises are not like allopathic medicines which generally provide short term but instantaneous relief, these yogic exercises will take a week to become completely effective. According to *Shrimad Bhagwad gita*, Yoga combined happy life is described as; Yogic *Ahara*, Vihara performed by the man with *sankalpa* (determination), *Karma* (skilfully performed actions), *Swapna* (sleep and rest) to awaken. Fibre containing diet and the Yogic techniques like *Pavanmuktasana*, *Shashankasana* helps to relieve the constipation as well as to prevent it in healthy being.

## CONCLUSION

As life style changes i.e. low fibre containing diet intake and physical inactivity are the main causes for constipation it is necessary to think about and work on these factors. Fibre containing diet has a recognized role in regulating gastro-intestinal function, particularly in helping to prevent as well as cure constipation. Many yoga poses also work by increasing blood flow, massaging the digestive tract and pushing things along through the system so that the body is able to form healthy bowel movements and prevent constipation. The twisting motions in many yoga are especially helpful for promoting elimination, plus relieving tension and support detoxification.

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