

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Constipation**

Constipation is a normal condition that affects roughly 80% of the population at some point during their lives. Individuals who most often report constipation are women, adults over the age of 65, and non-Caucasians. Constipation is also known to commonly occur during pregnancy. Constipation can manifest in individual patients in different ways. The condition may cause some patients to experience less frequent bowel movements. However, it may also cause individuals difficulty in passing stool.

Constipation occurs when waste or stool spends too much time in the digestive tract. Water is absorbed from the stool, causing it to become hard and dry. Stool then becomes more difficult to pass. There are several factors that may contribute to causing constipation:

1. Diets low in fiber
2. Lack of physical activity
3. Medications
4. Life changes or daily routine changes
5. Ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement
6. Neurological and metabolic disorders
7. Gastrointestinal tract problems
8. Functional gastrointestinal disorders

There are several lifestyle modifications individuals can make to combat constipation. Increasing the amount of fiber in the diet is one such important modification. Fruits, vegetables, beans, cereals, and bread are all high-fiber foods. Adequate fluid intake and

exercise are also very important. Drinking the appropriate amount of fluids will prevent stools from becoming hard and dry. Additionally, exercise can help decrease the amount of time stools spend in the digestive tract.

Patients who have made lifestyle and diet modifications and are still experiencing constipation may then want to consider laxative medications. There are several different types of laxatives available. Bulk-forming laxatives, such as Citrucel or Metamucil, absorb fluid in the intestines and facilitate the passage of stool. Osmotic agents, such as Milk of Magnesia or Miralax, help stool retain fluid and increase bowel movements. Emollient laxatives, such as Colace or Docusate, increase the amount of water absorbed by stool and soften fecal mass. Lubricant laxatives, such as Fleet and Zymol, prevent the colon from absorbing fecal water by coating the fecal content. Stimulant laxatives, such as Dulcolax or Senokot, cause intestinal muscle contraction, which facilitates the passage of stool. Stimulant laxative use is reserved for severe constipation and should not exceed one week. It's important to discuss individual symptoms with your pharmacist. Pharmacists can assist patients in selecting the most appropriate laxative therapy based on the constipation symptoms present.

Resources:

<http://www.fascrs.org/patients/conditions/constipation/>

<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/constipation/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/constipation/basics/definition/CON-20032773>

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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