

A recipe for good bowel health

Donna M. Fagan, PhD, RD

Dietetic Consultant for Clinical Dietetics and
Health Promotion
London, Ontario

Healthy bowel movements are important for older adults, and many of us are concerned about constipation. This can be a big problem for people who have had surgery and have been prescribed pain killers.

A good way to prevent or treat constipation is to regularly eat a high-fibre cereal that combines grains with fruit, seeds, and nuts. Try this tasty recipe. After one week you should have good results. You can buy the ingredients from a bulk food store.

High-fibre cereal

Combine, mix up, and store these ingredients in a cookie jar or a plastic covered container:

- 2 cups quick cooking (one minute) rolled oats
- ½ to 1/3 cup spelt bran
- ½ to 1/3 cup oat bran
- ½ to 1/3 cup wheat bran
- ½ to 1/3 cup ground psyllium
- ½ to 1/3 cup ground flax
- ½ to 1/3 cup wheat germ.

These ingredients are optional but add great flavour!

- 2 cups quick cooking (one minute) rolled oats
- sunflower seeds
- sesame seeds
- dried cranberries (orange flavoured cranberries add a nice flavor)
- raisins
- dates
- any other dried fruit you like.



One serving of the cereal = ½ cup. You can add cold milk and eat it as it is, or you can cook it gently mixing it with 1 – 1¼ cups of milk. Top it off with fruit, such as banana slices, blueberries, or raspberries.

For some people, eating cereal will not be enough to get their bowels moving. They may need to try a product from the drugstore along with this cereal. Ask your pharmacist for help.

How much fibre do we need?

Experts say that we should eat 14 grams of fibre for every 1,000 kilocalories we eat each day. An average person who gets between 1800 and 2000 kilocalories a day needs about 25 grams of fibre. This cereal will start you on your way. Each ½ cup serving provides 10 grams or more of fibre.

The oats, psyllium, and flax help to add bulk. They draw water and soften the bowel movement. The wheat and spelt bran add roughage.

Drink lots of liquid

Be sure to drink between 6 and 8 cups of fluid per day. It can be from any source – for instance, water, tea, coffee, juice, soup, jello, or popsicles. You can add some flavouring to water, such as lime cordial or Ribena. If you like the taste, you may drink more!