PATIENT GUIDE · GLP-1 CARE

Constipation is common. You can manage it.

GLP-1 medicines can slow down your bowels. This guide shows you why it happens, how to prevent it, and what to buy at the pharmacy if you need help.

- **It is a known side effect.** You are not doing anything wrong.
- **It often gets better** as your body gets used to the medicine.
- **Simple steps help.** Most people find relief with food, water, movement and over-the-counter products.



1 in 4

people on a GLP-1 may get constipated.

That is the high end seen in large studies of these medicines. It shows up most often in the first few weeks and after a dose goes up.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Your medicine slows things down. Your gut too.

GLP-1 medicines help you feel full longer. They do this by slowing how fast food leaves your stomach and moves through your gut. That is part of how they work. But slower movement can also mean slower bowel movements.

The good news: constipation on a GLP-1 can be managed. For most people it is a bump in the road, not a reason to stop.

Food moves slower

The longer stool sits in your colon, the more water your body pulls out of it. That makes stool hard and dry.

You eat less

Smaller meals mean less bulk and less fiber to push things along.

You may drink less

Many people feel less thirsty on a GLP-1. Less water in your body means drier stool.

PART 1 · PREVENTION

Three daily habits. Fewer bad days.

The best way to deal with constipation is to stop it before it starts. Fiber, water and movement work as a team. Try to do all three every day.



1. Eat more fiber, slowly

25 g
FIBER A DAY, OR MORE

Fiber adds bulk to stool and holds water in it. That makes stool softer and easier to pass. Aim for at least 25 grams of fiber a day.

Go slow

Adding a lot of fiber all at once can cause gas, bloating and cramps. Add about 5 grams more each week until you reach 25. Here is what that can look like if you start near 10 grams a day.

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
10 g	15 g	20 g	25 g

- **Fiber needs water.** More fiber without more water can make constipation worse.
- **Spread it out.** Have some fiber at each meal and snack, not all at once.
- **Check food labels.** Look for "Dietary fiber" on the Nutrition Facts panel.

Easy fiber foods

FOOD	AMOUNT	FIBER
Chia seeds	2 tablespoons	**10 g**
Raspberries	1 cup	**8 g**
Lentils, cooked	½ cup	**8 g**
Black beans, cooked	½ cup	**7 g**
Pear, with skin	1 medium	**6 g**
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	**5 g**
Avocado	½ fruit	**5 g**
Apple, with skin	1 medium	**4 g**
Kiwi	2 fruits	**4 g**
Oatmeal, cooked	1 cup	**4 g**
Prunes	5 prunes	**3 g**

Amounts are close estimates. Kiwi and prunes also have natural helpers that loosen stool.



2. Drink plenty of water

64+ oz
WATER A DAY

Water keeps stool soft. Drink at least 64 ounces a day. That is eight 8-ounce cups. You may need more if you are active, it is hot out, or you are adding fiber.



8 cups × 8 oz = 64 oz. A 32-ounce bottle filled twice gets you there.

- **Sip all day.** Big gulps can feel uncomfortable on a GLP-1. Small sips add up.
- **Keep a bottle with you.** If you can see it, you will drink it.
- **Set reminders.** Your phone can remind you to drink every hour or two.
- **Start your day with a warm drink.** Warm water, tea or coffee in the morning can help get your bowels moving.



3. Move your body

30 min
MOVEMENT MOST DAYS

When you move your body, the muscles in your gut start moving too. That helps push stool along. You do not need a hard workout. A walk counts.

- **Walk after meals.** Even 10 minutes after eating can help.
- **Break it up.** Three 10-minute walks work as well as one 30-minute walk.
- **Stretching and yoga count.** Twists and knee-to-chest stretches can ease gas and pressure.

BATHROOM HABITS THAT HELP

- **Go when you feel the urge.** Holding it lets stool dry out.
- **Try the same time each day.** After breakfast is a good time for many people.
- **Put your feet on a small stool.** Raising your knees above your hips makes it easier to go.

PART 2 · TREATMENT

Already backed up? Here is what helps.

Sometimes prevention is not enough. If you are already constipated, these over-the-counter products can help. Keep up with fiber, water and movement while you use them. Start with the gentlest option first.



AT THE PHARMACY

Shop by the active ingredient, not the brand name.

Turn the box over and find the Drug Facts label. The **active ingredient** is the medicine that does the work. Store brands with the same active ingredient work the same way and often cost less.

Some brands sell more than one kind of product. For example, Dulcolax makes both a stool softener and a stronger laxative. Always check the active ingredient.

Drug Facts

Active ingredient	Purpose
Polyethylene glycol 3350, 17 g	Osmotic laxative

Uses

Relieves occasional constipation. Generally produces a bowel movement in 1 to 3 days.

A Stool softeners

Stool softeners help water mix into stool so it is softer and easier to pass. They are gentle. They do not make you go. They help most when stool is hard and you have to strain.

● GENTLE

STOOL SOFTENER

Docusate sodium

Look for: Colace · Dulcolax Stool Softener · Store brand "stool softener"

A good first step if your stool is hard or dry. Often taken once or twice a day.

Works in 12 to 72 hours (½ day to 3 days)

Tip Take with a full glass of water.

● SOFTENER + LAXATIVE

COMBINATION

Docusate sodium + sennosides

Look for: Senokot-S · Peri-Colace · Store brand "senna-S"

Softens stool and also helps push it out. Useful when a softener alone is not enough.

Works in 6 to 12 hours

Tip Often taken at bedtime so it works by morning.

B Laxatives

Laxatives help you have a bowel movement. There are two main kinds.

Osmotic laxatives pull water into your bowels to soften stool. They are gentle and a good first choice.

Stimulant laxatives make the muscles in your bowels squeeze. They work faster but can cause cramps. Use them for short periods only.

● GENTLE · GOOD FIRST CHOICE

OSMOTIC LAXATIVE

Polyethylene glycol 3350

Look for: **MiraLAX** **Store brand "PEG 3350"**

A powder with no taste. Mix one capful (17 grams) into 4 to 8 ounces of water, juice, coffee or tea. Usually taken once a day.

Works in 1 to 3 days

Tip If stool gets too loose, use less or skip a day.

● MODERATE

OSMOTIC LAXATIVE

Magnesium hydroxide

Look for: **Phillips' Milk of Magnesia** **Store brand "milk of magnesia"**

A liquid or chewable tablet. Works faster than MiraLAX.

Works in 30 minutes to 6 hours

Ask your care team first if you have kidney problems.

● STRONG

OSMOTIC LAXATIVE

Magnesium citrate

Look for: **Citroma** **Store brand "magnesium citrate" liquid**

A liquid in a bottle. It is strong and is for when you are very backed up. Plan to stay close to a bathroom.

Works in 30 minutes to 6 hours

Tip Drink extra water after. It can pull a lot of fluid.

Ask your care team first if you have kidney or heart problems.

● STIMULANT · SHORT-TERM

STIMULANT LAXATIVE

Sennosides (senna)

Look for: **Senokot** **Ex-Lax** **Store brand "senna"**

Made from a plant. Usually taken at bedtime so it works by morning.

Works in 6 to 12 hours

Watch for Cramps or belly pain.

Do not use for more than 1 week unless your care team says it is OK.

● STIMULANT · SHORT-TERM

STIMULANT LAXATIVE

Bisacodyl tablets

Look for: **Dulcolax Laxative tablets** **Correctol** **Store brand "bisacodyl"**

Swallow whole. Do not crush or chew. Do not take within 1 hour of milk or antacids.

Works in 6 to 12 hours

Watch for Cramps or belly pain.

Do not use for more than 1 week unless your care team says it is OK.

C Other helpful options

These include supplements, suppositories and natural helpers. Fiber and magnesium glycinate supplements can be used every day to help prevent constipation. Suppositories are for when stool is stuck near the end and you need fast relief.

● GENTLE · DAILY USE

FIBER SUPPLEMENT

Psyllium or methylcellulose

Look for: **Metamucil** **Konsyl** **Citrucel** **Store brand "fiber"**

Helps you reach your 25 grams when food is not enough. Start with a small dose and build up, just like food fiber.

Works in 12 to 72 hours

Tip Always mix with a full 8-ounce glass of water.

Take 2 hours apart from other medicines. Fiber can keep them from being absorbed.

● GENTLE · DAILY USE

SUPPLEMENT

Magnesium glycinate

Look for: **"Magnesium glycinate" on the front** **Store brand or any brand**

Magnesium helps pull water into your bowels, which softens stool. The glycinate form tends to be gentle on the stomach. Many people take it at bedtime.

Works in Often within 1 to 3 days of daily use

Tip Its effect is mild. If you need more help, see magnesium citrate or MiraLAX above.

Follow the label. Do not take more than 350 mg a day unless your care team says it is OK. Ask first if you have kidney problems.

● FAST · MILD

SUPPOSITORY

Glycerin suppository

Look for: **Fleet Glycerin** **Store brand "glycerin suppositories"**

Placed in the rectum. Softens and slides out stool that is stuck near the end.

Works in 15 to 60 minutes

● FAST · STRONGER

SUPPOSITORY

Bisacodyl suppository

Look for: **Dulcolax suppository** **Store brand "bisacodyl suppository"**

Placed in the rectum. Makes the lower bowel squeeze to push stool out.

Works in 15 to 60 minutes

Watch for Cramps or a burning feeling.

● NATURAL

FOOD HELPERS

Prunes, prune juice and kiwi

Try: **4 to 8 oz prune juice** **5 prunes** **2 kiwis a day**

These foods have fiber plus natural compounds that draw water into stool. They are a gentle way to get things moving.

Works in Often within a day or two

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

A simple plan, one step at a time.

Move to the next step only if the one before it has not helped. This is a general plan. Your care team may give you a plan that fits you better.

1

EVERY DAY

Keep up the basics

Fiber (work up to 25 g), 64+ oz of water, and 30 minutes of movement. Add a daily fiber or magnesium glycinate supplement if you need it.

2

NO BOWEL MOVEMENT IN 2 TO 3 DAYS

Add a gentle helper

Try MiraLAX once a day, a stool softener, or both. Prunes or prune juice can help too.

3

STILL STUCK AFTER 2 MORE DAYS

Add a stronger laxative

Take senna or bisacodyl tablets at bedtime. Or try magnesium citrate if you are very backed up.

4

STOOL FEELS STUCK NEAR THE END

Try a suppository

Use a glycerin or bisacodyl suppository. If nothing works, message your Belle care team.

PART 3 · WHEN TO GET HELP

Know when to reach out.

Most constipation can be handled at home. But some signs mean you need help from a clinician. Do not stop your GLP-1 on your own. Your care team may be able to change your dose or slow down your dose increases.

Message your Belle care team if:

- You have not had a bowel movement in **4 or more days**, even after trying the steps above.
- You have needed a laxative for **more than 1 week**.
- You see **a small amount of bright red blood** on the toilet paper.
- Constipation is **making it hard to eat, drink or take your medicine**.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding, have kidney or heart disease, or take other medicines and are **not sure what is safe**.

Call 911 or go to the ER if you have:

- **Severe belly pain** that does not go away. It may spread to your back.
- A **swollen, hard belly** and you cannot pass gas.
- **Vomiting** and you cannot keep food or water down.
- **Black, tarry stool** or a lot of blood in your stool.
- **Fever with belly pain.**

These can be signs of a blockage or another serious problem. Do not take a laxative. Get care right away.

PLEASE READ

This guide is general health information. It is not medical advice for you. It does not replace advice from your Belle clinician, your own doctor or your pharmacist. Every person is different.

Always read and follow the label on any product you use. Talk to your care team or pharmacist before you start something new. This is extra important if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, have kidney or heart disease, or take other medicines.