# Wellness

Wednesday



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## Are You Constipated? These Foods And Drinks May Be To Blame.

Constipation is a common gastrointestinal issue that affects millions of people of all ages. It can be an uncomfortable and unpleasant condition that many would prefer to avoid. Did you know that what you eat can either help or hinder your bowel movements? In this Wellness Wednesday, we will explore some common foods and drinks that may contribute to constipation, as well as provide tips on how to alleviate this condition.

Understanding Constipation

According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, constipation is typically characterized by passing small amounts of hard, dry stool fewer than three times a week. However, the frequency of bowel movements can vary from person to person, with the normal range being anywhere from three times a day to three times a week. It's important to consider what is a deviation from your usual pattern.



Constipation goes beyond just infrequent bowel movements. Other symptoms may include pain or difficulty in passing stool, the feeling of not fully emptying the bowels, bloating, sluggishness, and stomach discomfort. While most people experience short-term constipation at some point, chronic constipation can have a negative impact on your quality of life and may lead to complications if left untreated.

**Factors That Contribute to Constipation** 

Various factors can contribute to constipation, including dehydration, lack of exercise, changes in routine (such as travel), stress, certain medications, and underlying health conditions like irritable bowel syndrome. However, in this article, we will focus on the role of diet in constipation.

Foods and Drinks That May Worsen Constipation

While no specific food or drink can directly cause constipation for most individuals, certain dietary habits can exacerbate an existing issue. Let's explore some foods and drinks that are known to potentially worsen constipation:

#### **Refined Grains**

Refined grains, such as white bread, white pasta, and white rice, are known to be binding and can contribute to constipation. Unlike whole grains, refined grains are lower in fiber, which is essential for promoting reqularity in the digestive system. The milling process used to produce refined grains strips away the fiber needed for facilitating digestion. Registered dietitian Stefani Sassos, the nutrition and fitness director for the Good Housekeeping Institute, recommends opting for whole grains instead. Whole grains are higher in fiber and can help move food through the digestive system more easily.

## **Cheese and Dairy Products**

Cheese and other dairy products are often high in fat but low in fiber, making them potential culprits for constipation. While individuals with lactose intolerance may experience diarrhea and gas after consuming dairy products, a 2022 literature review found that about 30% of lactose-intolerant individuals also experience constipation after consuming dairy. If you frequently experience constipation, it may be worth considering reducing your intake of cheese and dairy products or exploring alternative options that are lower in fat and higher in fiber.

#### **Red Meat**

Red meat, such as beef and pork, contains no fiber and is often high in fat and iron. The lack of fiber in red meat, coupled with its satiating properties, can make individuals less likely to reach for high-fiber foods like fruits and vegetables. This can contribute to constipation. While it's not necessary to eliminate red meat from your diet entirely, consider incorporating more fiber-rich foods alongside your meat-based meals to promote better digestion and regular bowel movements.

#### **Fried Foods**

Fried foods, including French fries, fried chicken, and mozzarella sticks, are notorious for their high fat content and lack of fiber. The combination of these factors can make it difficult for the body to digest fried foods, potentially leading to constipation. Sassos suggests limiting your consumption of fried and greasy foods, as they can be hard on the digestive system. Adding more fiber-rich options to your meals can help counteract the effects of fried foods on your digestive health.

#### **Alcohol**

Alcohol can have different effects on the gastrointestinal system, depending on the individual. While some people may experience soft stools or diarrhea after consuming alcohol, others may experience constipation. Dr. Kenneth Josovitz, a Virginia gastroenterologist with Gastro Health, advises individuals who are experiencing constipation to avoid alcohol. Alcohol can cause dehydration, which can worsen constipation. The suppression of vasopressin, a hormone responsible for water reabsorption in the kidneys, by alcohol can lead to increased urine output and dehydration.

## **Alleviating Constipation through Diet**

In addition to avoiding or limiting the consumption of foods and drinks that may worsen constipation, incorporating high-fiber foods into your diet can help alleviate this condition. Women should aim to consume at least 25 grams of fiber per day, while men should aim for about 38 grams per day.

Here are some fiber-rich foods that you can incorporate into your diet:

- Raspberries, apples, and pears with skin
- · Lentils and beans
- Broccoli and leafy greens
- Nuts, such as almonds and walnuts
- Prunes, known for their laxative properties, can also be an effective at-home remedy for constipation. Start with one to two prunes per day and gradually increase the quantity as tolerated. Prune juice, especially when warm, can also help stimulate digestive motility.

When increasing your fiber intake, it's important to do so gradually and ensure that you drink enough water. Adequate hydration is essential for proper fiber digestion in the body. Without enough water, high-fiber foods may actually contribute to constipation.

## **Additional Tips for Relieving Constipation**

In addition to dietary changes, there are other lifestyle modifications that can help alleviate constipation.

• Regular exercise: Engaging in physical activity, even a short 10- to 15-minute walk after a meal, can help stimulate bowel movements.

- Stress management: High levels of stress can impact digestive health. Finding ways to manage stress, such as through meditation, deep breathing exercises, or engaging in hobbies, can support regularity.
- Adequate hydration: Drinking enough water throughout the day is crucial for maintaining proper digestion and preventing dehydration, which can worsen constipation.
- Tea consumption: Drinking a cup of tea, especially hot tea, can help stimulate bowel movements due to its temperature and caffeine content. However, be mindful of the caffeine's potential diuretic effects and its impact on hydration.

#### When to Seek Medical Attention

While occasional constipation can often be resolved with dietary and lifestyle adjustments, certain circumstances warrant medical attention. Consult your doctor if you experience:

- New or severe constipation
- Constipation lasting more than a few weeks
- Constipation accompanied by bleeding, weight loss, or weakness

Your doctor can help determine the underlying cause of your constipation and develop an appropriate treatment plan.

## **Final Thoughts**

Constipation can be an uncomfortable and bothersome condition, but it is often manageable through dietary and lifestyle changes. By avoiding or reducing the consumption of foods and drinks that may worsen constipation and incorporating high-fiber options into your diet, you can support regular bowel movements and alleviate this condition. Remember to stay hydrated, exercise regularly, and manage stress to promote overall digestive health.

If you are concerned about your constipation or have any additional questions, it is always best to consult with a healthcare professional for personalized guidance.



## **INGREDIENTS**

## For the Butter Beans:

- 1 can of butter beans, drained & pat dry
- 2 teaspoons of olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon of kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon of onion powder, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon of smoked paprika
- Coarse sea salt, for finishing

## For the Lemon-Herb Green Sauce:

- 2 cups of parsley, chopped
- 1/2 cup of mint, chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1/4 cup of lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon of red chili flakes
- 1 tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil

#### WHAT ARE BUTTER BEANS?

Butter beans, also known as lima beans, are a type of legume that is packed with protein, fiber, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. They are versatile and can be used in a wide range of recipes, from soups and stews to dips and spreads. While some people may not be fond of the taste of butter beans, preparing them in a certain way can completely change their flavor profile and texture.

#### THE CRISPY TRANSFORMATION

The secret to making butter beans into a crispy and addictive snack lies in the cooking method. By baking or air frying them, you can achieve a crunchy texture that is incredibly satisfying. Even those who are not fans of beans will find themselves reaching for more of these crispy delights. The air fryer is particularly effective at getting foods super crispy, but if you don't have one, you can still enjoy crispy butter beans by baking them in the oven.

#### HOW TO MAKE CRISPY BUTTER BEANS

Now that you're familiar with the benefits of crispy butter beans, let's dive into the process of making them. There are two methods you can choose from: using an air fryer or baking them in the oven. Both methods yield deliciously crispy results, although the air fryer tends to produce a slightly crunchier texture.

#### **Nutrition Information**

Serving: 1/2 cup beans with 1/2 cup sauce, Calories: 187 kcal, Carbohydrates: 27.5 g, Protein: 8.5 g, Fat: 8 g, Saturat-ed Fat: 1 g, Sodium: 777 mg, Fiber: 8.5 g, Sugar: 3 g



## How to Make It

#### **Air Fryer Method:**

- 1. Begin by drying the butter beans well on paper towels. The drier the beans, the crispier they will become. Let them sit for about an hour to ensure they are completely dried.
- 2. In a medium bowl, toss the beans with olive oil, 1/4 teaspoon of kosher salt, 1/4 teaspoon of onion powder, and smoked paprika. Make sure each bean is coated evenly.
- 3. Transfer the seasoned beans to the air fryer basket and set the temperature to 380°F. Air fry for 15 minutes, shaking the basket every 5 minutes to ensure even cooking. 4. Once cooked, finish the beans with a sprinkle of coarse sea salt for an extra burst of flavor.
- 4. While the beans are cooking, prepare the lemon-herb green sauce. In a blender, combine 1/3 cup of the reserved bean liquid, parsley, mint, lemon zest, lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, remaining 1/4 teaspoon of onion powder, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon of kosher salt. Blend until smooth.
- 5. Transfer the sauce to a small bowl and top with red chili flakes for a hint of heat.
- 6. Serve the roasted butter beans with the lemon-herb green sauce for dipping and enjoy!

#### **Oven Method:**

- 1. Preheat your oven to 400°F. Make sure your beans are thoroughly dried by leaving them on the counter for a few hours before baking.
- 2. Transfer the beans to a parchment-lined baking sheet in a single layer. If needed, use multiple pans or bake in batches to ensure even cooking.
- 3. Bake the beans for 20 to 28 minutes, stirring halfway through, or until they are crisp and golden.
- 4. While the beans are baking, prepare the lemon-herb green sauce as mentioned in the air fryer method.
- 5. Once the beans are done, remove them from the oven and let them cool slightly.
- 6. Serve the crispy butter beans with the lemon-herb green sauce and enjoy!

## **FEATURED EXERCISE**

https://www.self.com/story/bird-dog-exercise

## Featured Exercise ► Bird-Dog Exercise (

#### HOW TO DO IT:

- Start in tabletop position
- Engage core for stability
- Extend left leg back and right arm forward
- Maintain neutral spine, avoid rotation
- Hold position, focus on stability
- Return to starting position
- Repeat with opposite leg and arm

#### THE BENEFITS:

- 1. Gluteal Muscles (Glutes): The gluteal muscles, including the gluteus maximus, gluteus medius, and gluteus minimus, play a crucial role in hip extension and stability. These muscles are responsible for pushing your leg back and controlling leg movement.
- 2. Abdominal Muscles: The bird dog exercise engages your abdominal muscles, including the trans
  - versus abdominis, rectus abdominis, external obliques, and internal obliques. These muscles help support your trunk, maintain internal abdominal pressure, and facilitate movement.
- 3. Back Muscles: The muscles in your back, including the latissimus dorsi, rhomboids, levator scapulae, and various deep intrinsic muscles, support your spine and trunk, allowing for movement and stability.



Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.





