

Bowel Health

After a brain injury, your bowels might not function as they used to and nutrition becomes more important to help maintain bowel regularity. Additionally, some medications can cause diarrhea or constipation. A diet that includes fiber with adequate hydration is helpful to maintain bowel regularity and improve stool consistency. Water works with the fiber to make stool the ideal consistency so it is important to stay hydrated as well as consume fiber-containing foods.

There are two types of fiber:

Insoluble Fiber can help with regularity by adding bulk to stool to help move stool through the gastrointestinal tract. Insoluble fiber is found in:

- Whole Grain foods- whole wheat bread, brown/wild rice, whole wheat pasta
- Bran
- Nuts and seeds
- Vegetables, especially those with skins or peels
- Fruits, especially those with skins or peels

Soluble Fiber can help with constipation and stools that are too hard or too soft by drawing water into the stool to form a gel. Soluble fiber is found in:

- Legumes- dried peas and beans
- Oats, rye and barley
- Some fruits, especially apples, bananas and berries
- Some vegetables, such as potatoes/yams, broccoli and carrots
- Psyllium seed and most commercial fiber supplements

The recommended fiber intake is 25-30 grams per day. Add in fiber slowly to achieve this amount instead of increasing fiber all at once. Aim for a mix of insoluble and soluble fiber in your daily diet. Try to include at least one fiber-containing food with each meal. Drink 6-8 eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated fluids every day unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.

If you are having diarrhea, try to stay hydrated and limit fiber until it resolves.

If you have constipation for more than five days, notify your doctor.