

2.7 GASTRO-INTESTINAL DISEASES

2.7.1 Constipation (*Vibandha*)

Introduction

Constipation is a general term used by patients to indicate fewer bowel movements, hard stools, painful defaecation and feeling of bloating, abdominal discomfort or incomplete elimination³⁷. It is a very common gastro-intestinal disorder experienced by most people at some time during their life time. Numerous conditions can lead to constipation by disrupting the normal process of absorption, stool formation and propelling of feces within the large intestine. Constipation is very similar to the disease condition *Vibandha* described in *Ayurveda*.

Constipation may be just due to a poor diet with insufficient fiber, poor fluid intake or a side effect of certain medication. Sometimes it may be due to any mechanical obstruction or a serious problem such as colon cancer.

Elderly people are more likely to suffer from constipation due to changes in diet, medication and/ or decreased mobility and intestinal motility. The exact figure on the prevalence of constipation is not known. Around 2% of the population suffers recurrent and constant constipation and is more common in women than in men. The overall prevalence of self reported constipation is 24 to 37%. In the institutionalized elderly, up to 50% self-report constipation and up to 74% use laxatives daily³⁸.

Aetiology

Constipation occurs when the large intestine absorbs too much water from the stool result into dry and hard stools. It may also be due to inadequate contraction of bowel walls to expel the stool and waste product. It occurs due to

1. Poor diet and liquid intake (low fiber diet, less quantity etc.)



2. Immobility and lack of exercise
3. Ageing, stress and travel
4. Ignoring the urge to defecate
5. Inadequate fluid intake
6. Medications (antacids, anti-histamines, anti-psychotic drugs, aspirin, beta blockers, anti-hypertensive drugs, iron and calcium supplements, diuretics, calcium channel blockers etc.)
7. Secondary to another disease (hypothyroidism, anal fissure, chronic renal failure, colon or rectal cancer, hypercalcaemia)

Risk factors:

1. Older age
2. Female gender
3. Less exercise/ physical activity
4. Low calorie intake

Clinical features

The following symptoms may be associated with constipation

1. Passage of hard stools
2. Abdominal pain/ discomfort or bloating
3. Straining during passage of stools
4. Headache
5. Malaise
6. Feeling of incomplete evacuation

Complications

Although constipation is rarely serious, but in chronic stage it may lead to

1. Bowel obstruction
2. Hemorrhoids



3. Rectal prolapse
4. Hernia
5. Spastic colitis
6. Laxative abuse - A large number of people use laxatives (self-medication) for constipation. This is not a good practice, especially if these are used regularly for longer duration. Chronic laxative use can alter the normal physiological functions of the intestines.
7. Excessive straining may have deleterious effects on the cerebral, coronary, and peripheral arterial circulation resulting in syncope, cardiac ischemia, and transient ischemic attacks.

Diagnosis³⁹

Criteria for diagnosing chronic functional constipation

- a. Presence of two or more of the following symptoms, for at least 12 weeks in the preceding year
 1. Straining with > 25% of bowel movements
 2. Sense of incomplete evacuation with > 25% of bowel movements
 3. Hard or pellet stools with > 25% of bowel movements
 4. Manual evaluation maneuvers with > 25% of bowel movements
 5. Feeling of anorectal blockage with > 25% of bowel movements
 6. Number of bowel movements two or less per week
- b. Absence of loose stools and insufficient criteria for irritable bowel syndrome

Investigations

1. Stool examination
2. Barium enema
3. Lower G.I. Endoscopy
4. Ultra-sonography (whole abdomen)
5. Complete haemogram
6. Sigmoidoscopy



Management approaches

a. Prevention

1. Consumption of *godhūma* (wheat), *mudga* (green gram), old rice, *rasona* (garlic), seasonal fruits, high fiber diet, *hiṅgu* (asafoetida), *drākṣa* (grapes), *āmalakī* (*Phyllanthus emblica* gartn), *harītakī* (*Terminelia chebula* Retz.), *pippalī* (long pepper), *śuṅṭhi* (dry ginger), green leafy vegetables and lukewarm water
2. Consumption of light and easily digestible high fiber diet
3. Drink plenty of fluids and water (minimum 2-3 lt. per day)
4. Drink a glass of warm water, early in the morning (This helps in gastro-colic reflex and results into bowel evacuation)
5. Practice regular exercise
6. Follow a healthy dietetic plan that emphasise fruits, green leafy and other vegetables and fibre rich diet
7. Avoid irregular food habits, heavy, unwholesome, excess oily and spicy food items, bakery and preserved items
8. Avoid suppression of natural urges, excess tea, coffee, smoking
9. Avoid using self medication

b. Medical management

Line of treatment (Ca. Ci. 28/ 90)

1. **Nidāna parivarjana (avoidance of aetiological factors)** - Incompatible diet, irregular food habits, low fiber diet, stress, and inadequate fluid intake should be avoided.
2. **Samśodhana cikitsā** (Bio-cleansing therapies) followed by **Śamana cikitsā** (Palliative therapy) should be advocated.
 - i. *Snehapāna* (internal oleation) with *Sukumāra ghr̥ta* 50 ml with 2-3 gm *saindhava lavaṇa* daily for 3-7 days before *pañcakarma* (bio- cleansing procedure)
 - ii. *Sarvāṅga sveda* for 1 day
 - iii. *Virecana* (therapeutic purgation) with*
 - Drākṣā* (*Vitis vinifera*) - 10 gm
 - Āragvadha* (*Cassia fistula*) -10 gm



Harītakī (*Terminalia chebula*) - 10 gm

Kuṭakī (*Picrorhiza curroa*) - 5 gm along with 1 teaspoon full *Eraṇḍa* (*Ricinus communis*) *taila*

or

Eraṇḍa taila 10 - 20 ml with half glass of milk at night

iv. *Vasti*

- *Anuvāsana vasti* with *Daśamūla taila/ Pippalyādi taila* 50ml and *Nirūha vasti* with *Daśamūla kvātha* 240 ml, honey 120 ml, *Pippalyādi taila* 120 ml, *saindhava lavaṇa* 5 gm etc. alternately for 8 days (*Yoga vasti krama*)

v. *Phalavarti* (medicated suppositories)

Virechana and *Vasti* should be decided by physician according to the condition of the patient whether *Śodhana* therapy (bio-cleansing therapies) is beneficial or not.

* (Above said formulations and dosage are common in practice but dose should be adjusted by the physician according to patient's condition)

3. Drug therapy

If life style modifications fail to relieve the constipation, then only pharmacological therapy usually with laxatives carminatives and *pācana* drugs should be started.

SINGLE DRUGS

Drug	Dosage (per dose)	MOA ^s / Vehicle	Duration*
<i>Aśvagola</i> (<i>Plantago ovata</i> Forsk.) (<i>Isabgol</i>) <i>cūrṇa</i>	2-5 gm	Warm water/ milk at bed time	S.O.S.
<i>Sonāmukhī</i> (<i>Cassia aungustifolia</i> Vahl.) <i>cūrṇa</i>	1-2 gm	Lukewarm water at bed time	S.O.S.
<i>Harītakī</i> (<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz) <i>cūrṇa</i>	3 gm	Lukewarm water at bed time	S.O.S.

COMPOUND FORMULATIONS

Drug	Dosage (per dose)	MOA ^s / Vehicle	Duration*
<i>Hīngvaṣṭaka cūrṇa</i>	1.5-3 gm.	<i>Ghūta</i> / Luke warm water	3 days



<i>Triphalā cūrṇa</i>	2-3 gm	Luke warm water	3 days
<i>Lavaṇabhāskara cūrṇa</i>	1-2.5 gm	Butter Milk	3 days
<i>Avipattikara cūrṇa</i>	5 gm	Water/ Milk	3 days
<i>Pañcasakāra cūrṇa</i>	1.5-3 gm	only at bed time with Water	3 days
<i>Gandharvahastādi kaṣāya</i>	15 ml	Water	7 - 10 days
<i>Citrakādi vaṭī</i>	1.5 gm	Water	7 days
<i>Kaisora guggulu</i>	1.5 gm	Milk	7 days
<i>Eraṇḍa pāka</i>	3-6 gm	Luke warm water	3 days
<i>Kalyāṇaguḍa</i>	3-6 gm	Luke warm water	3 days
<i>Kumāryāsava</i>	12-24 ml	Water	7 days
<i>Abhayāriṣṭa</i>	12-24 ml	Water	7 days
<i>Eraṇḍa Taila</i>	10-20 ml	Lukewarm water only at bed time	S.O.S.
<i>Hinḡutriguṇa taila</i>	10-20 ml	Lukewarm water	7 days
<i>Daśamūla taila</i>	for <i>nuvāsana vasti</i>	-	5days
<i>Daśamūla kvātha</i>	for <i>nirūha vasti</i>	-	3 days
<i>Sukumāra ghṛta</i>	for <i>snehapāna</i>	-	3 - 7days

^s MOA - Mode of administration

* Initially 2 times in a day after meal for 15 days followed by condition of patient and physician's direction

NOTE: Out of the drugs mentioned above any one of the drug or in the combination may be prescribed by the physician. The duration of the treatment may vary from patient to patient. Physician should decide the dosage (per dose) and duration of the therapy based on the clinical findings and response to therapy.

c. Yogic Practices- The following *yogic* practices are beneficial in constipation; however, these should be performed only under the guidance of qualified *Yoga therapist*. Duration should be decided by the *Yoga therapist*.

1. *Kūrmāsana, Vagrāsana, Kaṭīcakraśana, Sarvāṅgāsana, Śavāsana, Pavanamuktāsana, Maṇḍūkāsana, Vajrāsana, Meruḍaṇḍa sañcālanāsana* etc.



2. *Yogamudrā, Śaṅkha prakṣāḷana, Nāḍī śodhana*
3. *Sūrya anuloma viloma*, deep relaxation technique

Counselling - Advice the patient to

1. Make habit of regular bowel habits
2. Walk for about 30 minutes daily
3. Take of warm water or milk in early morning
4. Eat an adequate breakfast
5. Take plenty of fluids
6. Use of rich fiber diet like beans, brown rice, whole cereals, entire fruits, citrus fruits, legumes in diet
7. Don't suppress the urge to defecate
8. Sit on the toilet for 10 minutes at the same time every day to induce regularly bowel movements

Indications for referral

- a. Acute intestinal obstruction
- b. Rectal prolapse
- c. Undiagnosed bleeding per annum and not responding to medication

COSTING DETAILS

Approx. costing of Constipation management

S.No.	Medicine	Requirement	Unit	Rate in Rs.	Cost in Rs.
1.	<i>Aśvagola cūrṇa</i>	2-5	gm	2.0	4-10
2.	<i>Sonāmukhī cūrṇa</i>	1-2	gm	0.9	1-2
3.	<i>Harītakī cūrṇa</i>	10	gm	0.28	3.0
4.	<i>Hiṅvaṣṭaka cūrṇa</i>	10-20	gm	0.82	9-17
5.	<i>Triphalā cūrṇa</i>	15-20	gm	0.31	5-7



6.	<i>Lavaṇabhāskara cūrṇa</i>	20	gm	0.42	9.0
7.	<i>Avipattikara cūrṇa</i>	30	gm	0.4	12
8.	<i>Pancasakāra cūrṇa</i>	10-20	gm	0.46	5-10
9.	<i>Gandharvahastādi kaṣāya</i>	210-450	ml	0.5	105-210
10.	<i>Citrakādi vaṭī</i>	50	gm	1.20	60
11.	<i>Kaiśora guggulu</i>	50	gm	2.2	11
12.	<i>Eraṇḍa pāka</i>	100	gm	0.16	16
13.	<i>Kumāryāsava</i>	100	ml	0.075	7.5
14.	<i>Eraṇḍa Taila</i>	50	ml	0.48	24
15.	<i>Pippalyādi taila</i>	650	ml	0.7	455
16.	<i>Hiṅgutriguṇa taila</i>	140-280	ml	0.61	86-172
17.	<i>Sukumāra ghṛta</i>	210-350	ml	0.63	133-221
18.	<i>Daśamūla taila</i>	250	ml	0.60	150
19.	<i>Daśamūla kvātha</i>	200	gm	1.9	380

Approx. costing of Pañcakarma procedure in Constipation **

S.No.	Pañcakarma procedure	Days	Rate in Rs./ day	Cost in Rs.
1.	<i>Sarvāṅga sveda</i>	1	150	150
2.	<i>Virecana Package</i> (including preparatory and post therapeutic procedures)	-	-	1000
3.	<i>Yoga vasti</i> (including preparatory and post therapeutic procedures)	8	-	1250

