



7 Foods that Make the Best Natural Laxatives

By: Dr. Axe, October 23, 2015

Natural laxatives, in the form of certain foods and herbs, have been used for health purposes for over 2,000 years. People have always known that bowel movements are necessary for good health, but in today's fast-paced society, a poor diet, stress or frequent traveling can get in the way of you and good digestion — so **pooping** regularly can suddenly become tough! To deal with not being “regular,” many people turn to laxatives to get the job done fast. In fact, laxatives are one of the most commonly bought over-the-counter medications there is. According to the Department of Clinical Neuroscience at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine, people who abuse laxatives regularly are generally categorized as falling into one of four groups.

What to Use Instead of Over the Counter: Foods that Improve Digestive Function

Our bodies have an amazing natural ability to cleanse and detox on their own — we just need to provide the correct nutrients and hydrating fluids. Low water and nutrient intake can lead to the buildup of toxins in our bodies because the digestive tract becomes dry while the liver and kidneys, the main **detoxifying** organs, slow down functioning. A much better way to **relieve constipation** over using laxatives is to make long-term changes to your diet. Your body can only really “**detox**” when you stop putting in the wrong things and start giving it what it really needs to function properly. Eating more fiber, removing inflammatory foods that cause constipation in the first place and adding in foods that act like natural laxatives is a much safer approach than relying on any laxative capsules, juices, colonics or pills. Most experts agree that it's important to go to the bathroom at least three or more times per week at a minimum. The bottom line is that if you're currently not going at least this amount, making changes to your diet and lifestyle first (for example, **exercising** and **reducing stress**) is crucial to solving the problem long-term. Focus first and foremost on eating real, whole foods, especially plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Nearly all types of vegetables, fruits, ancient grains, seeds, nuts and beans are great sources of both soluble and insoluble fiber, along with important electrolytes, vitamins and minerals that your digestive system relies on. A higher nutrient intake in general increases your ability to form solid stools and successfully pass them through your digestive system. One thing to note about foods that act like natural laxatives: Each person is a bit different, and not everyone reacts to foods in the same way.

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1. Aloe Vera: Aloe vera is one of the oldest and well-researched natural laxatives there is. Sometimes called aloe “latex,” this substance comes packed with enzymes, vitamins, minerals and electrolytes that help **heal the gut**. For example, anthraquinones are a type of compound present in aloe that act like a laxative by increasing intestinal water content, stimulating mucus secretion and increasing intestinal peristalsis naturally (contractions that break down food). Aloe vera latex also has anti-inflammatory components that reduce swelling and improve function of the digestive organs. Some of the other **benefits of aloe vera** are its ability to help normalize acid/alkaline and **pH balance**, lessen yeast formation and encourage the growth of good digestive bacteria.

2. Chia Seeds: One of the **benefits of chia seeds** is its ability to work as a natural laxative. Chia seeds combined with liquid form a gelatinous substance that easily moves through your intestines. As a great way to increase the fiber in your diet, chia seeds swell and expand in the digestive tract, absorbing water. They're best for constipation when you also increase your fluid intake, helping them move through the gut easily.

3. Flaxseeds: Flaxseeds are an excellent source of fiber, which adds bulk to your stool and helps it pass through your intestines. As an added bonus, flaxseeds work to treat both constipation and diarrhea! They're practically tasteless, and one of the **benefits of flaxseeds** is it's easy to use in recipes you already make, like oats, baked goods and smoothies. Just remember that whenever you eat a lot of fiber, you want to also make sure to drink plenty of water too — since a high amount of fiber without enough hydrating liquids can actually result in even more bathroom troubles! Drinking enough water in general along with a **high-fiber diet** makes it less likely you'll experience uncomfortable hard stools, bloating, gas, pains and further constipation.

4. Leafy Green Veggies: Not only a great source of fiber, leafy greens also provide plenty of magnesium. **Magnesium deficiency** is one of the most common deficiencies in adults, so eating more comes with many benefits, including better digestive health. Magnesium is an electrolyte that has the natural ability to safely soften stool and help draw in water from your gut. Without enough magnesium, it's hard for stool to easily move through your system, especially since magnesium is a natural muscle relaxer, which can help stop cramping in the abdomen. If you notice that increasing **magnesium-rich foods** results in your stools becoming too loose and watery, you can adjust your intake until its comfortable and back to normal.

5. Probiotic Foods: Probiotics are “good bacteria” in your gut that are able to balance various types of “bad bacteria.” They help create a healthy environment in your gut “microflora” and can help keep you free of digestive problems, including constipation or diarrhea. **Probiotic foods** include things like kefir, kombucha, **sauerkraut**, **kimchi** and **probiotic yogurt**. Just make sure that when buying dairy products, you always choose organic products, as they are easier on digestion, such as **goat milk** products, organic kefir, raw dairy products or dairy that doesn't contain A1 casein. It's possible that low-quality pasteurized/homogenized dairy, or too much dairy in general (especially if someone has **symptoms of lactose intolerance**), can cause inflammation and contribute to digestive dysfunction.

6. High-Fiber Fruit (Berries, Figs, Apples, Prunes, Pears): Fruit provides high levels of fiber and water in addition antioxidants, which can help to reduce inflammation throughout the digestive system. While fresh fruit such as berries, melon and **apples** are more hydrating and filling, dried fruit like **figs**, prunes or dates are also a good source of dietary fiber when in a pinch, especially when you consume several at once. Fruits that contain pectin fiber (apples or pears) are especially good choices, since pectin stimulates your bowels. **Apple cider vinegar** is also an excellent option for naturally treating constipation! For most people, fruit helps relieve constipation while also making you feel comfortably full, but again it comes down to individual reactions to various kinds.

7. Coconut Water: **Coconut** water helps with maintaining healthy electrolyte levels, preventing dehydration and clearing out your urinary tract. For centuries, coconut water has been used for a natural hydration boost due to its high electrolyte content, especially potassium (which it provides 12 percent of your daily value of in every one-cup serving). In fact, coconut water can be so healing for constipation that some people find drinking too much loosens stools to an uncomfortable level, so start slow.