

newsletter

Constipation in People with Learning Disabilities

People with Learning Disabilities are at a greater risk of constipation than the general public. This is because of the following this:

- Communication barriers
- Fear of unfamiliar environments
- Lack of understanding of the importance of going to the toilet
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Poor diet
- Side effects of medication
- Reduced mobility
- Lack of exercise

A systematic review of 31 studies published between 1990 and 2016 found that people with an LD were more likely to suffer from constipation than people without an LD. The review found that, across studies, prevalence was high, with 21 studies reporting rates of over 33% and 14 studies reporting rates of 50% or more. Over 12 months, laxative prescriptions were received by 25.7% of people with an LD compared with 0.1% of people without an LD. Constipation was registered as a health problem for nearly 60% of people with profound learning and multiple disabilities, 65% of whom had been prescribed laxatives in the previous year. Age was not consistently associated with constipation, but physical inactivity was.*

* Source :Christina Maslen, Rebecca Hodge, Kim Tie, Richard Laugharne, Kirsten Lamb and Rohit Shankar
British Journal of General Practice 2022; 72 (720): 348-351. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp22X720077>



Symptoms of Constipation

- Abdominal pain
- Rectal bleeding and anal fissures
- Bloating
- Distension
- Loss of weight
- Irritability
- Infrequent stools
- Hard stools

What can be done to help

- Treatment will vary depending on the patient and their assessment
- Encourage healthy diet and frequent fluid intake
- Prescribe regular laxatives if needed
- Check other medication to see if the constipation could be a side effect

Guidance

[Poo Matters - Information for health professionals \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/poo-matters/)

[POO Matters - Information for families and carers \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/poo-matters/)

[Easy Read Constipation NHS](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation/)

Learning Disabilities Health Facilitation Team

Our team will be able to help if your patient is reluctant to participate in treatment for their constipation. We can offer easy read information material; we can work alongside GP's and family members in creating a simplified bowel movement chart and the team can assist if further tests are required and potential appointments in local hospitals.

Please contact the Health Facilitator associated with your surgery or alternatively our team if you would any further information of the services we offer.

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