Chronically constipated? are my intestines blocked? [1]

Alice,

I've recently learned that a person's intestines can become blocked or lined with fecal matter that never produces itself in a stool. How would I know if my own intestines were being blocked? Any information or home remedies?

?Constipated for Life

Answer

Dear Constipated for Life,

It's sounds as though a recent bowel enlightenment has raised some questions about your own health. Although it's true that intestinal blockage may occur due to chronic constipation, not much has been documented about fecal matter permanently lining the intestine. Obstruction occurs when too much matter collects in the bowel and blocks the entire passageway, preventing excretion from occurring. This can be caused by many different things, including gallstones, tumors, a twisted intestine, hernias, or scar tissue. On a less serious note, it can also be caused by lack of fiber in the diet that leads to decreased movement of the fecal matter. These bowel (un)movements remain in the colon, eventually drying up, hardening, making it increasingly difficult to move through the body and resulting in constipation.

Signs of bowel obstruction include fecal incontinence, watery stools (because only liquids can bypass the obstruction), abdominal pain, pencil-thin stools, bloating, and abdominal distention. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you may want to consult your health care provider. Your provider may order diagnostic tests like CT scans and x-rays, as well as an abdominal and rectal exam in order to determine what exactly is going on and through your digestive tract. Once a diagnosis has been determined, s/he can then treat you for your condition. If it is fecal impaction, enemas or manual dissolution of the stool may be performed to clean you out. In more rare cases of total obstruction or over-dilation of the colon, surgery may become necessary.
The best way to stop this stoppage is to make sure constipation does not occur in the first place. Be aware that some medications or underlying health issues can cause constipation and it's best to visit with your provider about the specifics. For most people, increasing the amount of fiber in the diet, drinking an adequate amount of fluid, and getting enough physical activity have all been shown to be effective at conquering constipation.

Hope everything comes out well in the end,

Alice!

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