

## Sullivan Physical Therapy Offers Tips for a Regular Life

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According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 4 million Americans experience frequent constipation, accounting for 2.5 million physician visits and about \$725 million spent on over the counter laxatives... yet the problem still exists....

Perhaps a fresh look at the big picture will give an alternate strategy to solving, or at least managing, this common gastrointestinal problem. Let's consider the elements of diet and life stress.

**Diet** is responsible for one thing here: what goes in must (at some point) come out. The "coming out" part depends on the **speed** upon which the food is processed. If your gut doesn't like something you ingest such as milk or gluten, then the speed of processing is quite swift and you will have the opposite of constipation. This happens because the small intestine and colon are trying to quickly be rid of an irritating substance. If the food you choose is low in fiber (high fat or processed), the bowel slows down. Because the colon's job is to absorb water from digested food forming in solid waste, food that speeds through the bowel exits as loose stool, and food that moves too slowly eventually becomes hard stool and is difficult to pass.

Wikipedia defines **Stress** as "the failure of an organism—human or animal—to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats, whether actual or imagined." Whatever its source, The American Journal of Medical Sciences tells us that an increase in **stress** causes a decrease in colon motility (**speed**) and an increase in sphincter activity. Chronic low level **stress** and anxiety can also inhibit the gastrocolic reflex which normally triggers the bowel to empty when food is introduced to an empty stomach.

The take home message: Fuel your body wisely, and manage your stress well!

Is constipation slowing you down? The team at Sullivan Physical Therapy can help you address this problem by providing you with tools to decrease constipation and other digestive-related issues you may be experiencing. For more information, contact our office at 335-9300 or visit our website: [www.sullivanphysicaltherapy.com](http://www.sullivanphysicaltherapy.com).

