

GETTING BELLY BACK IN BALANCE

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

YOGA TO EASE CONSTIPATION

I don't watch TV often but after seeing a few hours of TV the other night I was advertised at least three different constipation cures. It led me to believe that a lot of women are dealing with constipation and unaware that they don't need to. After a little bit of research, I found that according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 16% of adults have constipation symptoms and this more than doubles for adults over 60. Women, during pregnancy or after giving birth are more likely to suffer symptoms.

Of course, if your constipation is persistent or painful, you should go see your doctor.

However, I have a tool that not enough people are talking about for constipation. Stress-Relief. I've watched clients who have suffered with constipation for years, in a one hour yoga therapy session, get relief.

Of course, those over-the-counter drugs might seem like an easy out if you don't have an underlying medical condition. In many cases you have to do the really hard work of letting go of stress and engaging in better self-care. The parasympathetic nervous system oversees our rest and digest functions. Hence without rest, it is hard to digest, hence constipation.

Finding a balanced life with low stress, can be a lifelong journey for many women. As you know "just calm down" won't work. "Just calm

down and you'll poop" won't work either. Here are a few yogic tools to try on for your digestion. You don't even need to put on yoga clothes.

- **Movement.** Feeling particularly stressed? Put your phone down and go for a vigorous walk. If it feels too cold or too hot for you, something vigorous inside like jumping jacks. Movement is important for digestion.

- **Child's Pose.** After you've gotten that initial surge of energy out, make your way down onto the floor into a child's pose. You can rest your hands back by your heels if your shoulders feel tight. Take 10 slow breaths with a long spine.

- **Wind-Relieving Pose.** Flip over on to your back and hug your knees into your chest for wind-relieving pose. You can make little circles on the ground with your low back if that feels good in the moment. Stay for at least two minutes.

- **Breath Meditation.** Lay flat on the floor with your feet flat on the ground, knees bent or with legs extended out long on the floor, whichever is more comfortable on your low back. Rest a blanket or very light weight (think, a buckwheat pillow) on your belly. As you inhale through your nose let your belly raise the blanket, as you exhale let the blanket lower. Try to stay for five minutes, just feeling the blanket rise and fall.

- **Slowing down.** Maybe life won't let you slow down all of the time, but you can slow down your pace when

you're eating. Smell your food, taste it, let your body enjoy it. Don't look at other screens while eating.

- **Add moisture to your meals.** Cook oils in vegetables, eat juicy fruits. Ayurveda cites that cold and dry elements contribute to constipation. If you want crackers, add a hummus or butter. Ditch the dry toast. Choose soft tacos over hard.

- **Avoid cold.** Try soups, cooked foods, and warm teas. Drink room temperature water. I know, it's hard to give up smoothies and ice cubes but back off from consuming them ALL the time and see if it makes a difference.

- **Sleep.** Make sure you're giving yourself enough down time so that your nervous system can rest.

- **Listen to your body.** Do you sometimes get the urge to go and hold back? Bowel movements are normal and natural. Would you deny your parent or your child the chance to go? When you need to go to the bathroom, let yourself go.

Kaitlyn Vittozzi is a C-IAYT Yoga Therapist with a brand-new studio in Penfield, NY. Want to live less stress and get more comfortable in your own body? Visit TozziYoga.com

{ LIFE IN BALANCE }

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