

Women's Health **UPDATE**

Straight Talk On Women's Digestive Health

(NAPSA)—Are you unable to enjoy daily activities such as spending time with friends, traveling and exercising because of the physical symptoms of constipation? If so, you are not alone. Constipation, the infrequent and difficult passage of stool, is a common and costly medical disorder that affects more than 42 million adults in the United States. According to a nationwide survey conducted by Braun Research, 87 percent of women age 40 and older have been made physically uncomfortable by constipation and more than two-thirds of those surveyed have been negatively impacted by the condition. Some people who suffer from constipation may find having a bowel movement painful, and often experience straining and bloating.

“Gynecologists are routinely consulted by women who are concerned that their bloating, pelvic discomfort and expanding abdominal girth are due to their hormones, gynecologic problems or even tumors. A history of their bathroom habits, together with a thorough examination often reveal, however, that these symptoms may be due to chronic constipation,” said Dr. Judith Reichman, a well-known women's health specialist and “Today” show contributor. “To encourage women to learn about digestive health problems and utilize available resources, I am actively involved in the national women's health educational initiative called Straight Talk on Women's GI Health.”

Though it can be embarrassing to talk about, digestive health problems are real and should not be ignored, as they may not always be due to hormonal changes. Numerous factors can contribute to occasional constipation, including lack of exercise, lifestyle changes and not drinking enough water. It is important to note, however, that constipation



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may also be the result of something that is not controllable, such as side effects of certain medications and specific conditions or diseases.

Unfortunately, chronic constipation treatment has been far from satisfactory, as few options work for everyone. While it is often recommended that individuals alleviate symptoms by increasing their intake of fiber and water, these lifestyle changes may not be effective enough to improve one's quality of life. It is therefore important to talk to your doctor about treatment options that may help improve your symptoms and overall well-being. The Straight Talk on Women's GI Health campaign aims to educate women age 40 and older about digestive health problems and provide them with the tools necessary to maintain an ongoing dialogue with their physicians.

Women can visit www.GIStraightTalk.com, a resource that supports the Straight Talk on Women's GI Health campaign. The interactive Web site features several tools to empower women to improve their digestive health, including the D.I.G.E.S.T. Tip Sheet, an educational brochure on the importance of digestive health, information on alleviating symptoms and advice on how to talk to one's health care provider about digestive health topics.