

Synbiotics in the Treatment of Constipation in Men

By Swiss Medical Weekly

Constipation is a common problem in clinical practice. It does not, however, have one consistently used definition. Because of the wide range of normal bowel habits, constipation is difficult to define precisely. Stool frequency is most often used to describe constipation, and has been defined as less than three stools per week. Frequency alone, however, is not sufficient criterion to describe constipation as patients often complain not only about frequency, but also about stool size or consistency, straining, lower abdominal pain or fullness, and a sense of incomplete evacuation.

A synbiotic is a supplement that contains both a prebiotic and a probiotic that work together to improve the “friendly flora” of the human intestine. The best synbiotic combinations currently available include bifidobacteria and fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS), Lactobacillus GG and inulins, and bifidobacteria and lactobacilli with FOS or inulins. The combination has the ability to heal and regulate the intestinal flora, particularly after the destruction of microorganisms following antibiotic, chemotherapy, or radiation therapies. A symbiotic may prevent food allergies, ulcerous colitis, constipation, diarrhea, and various cancers.

The current study was performed as a 4 week, double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled trial in young men suffering from functional constipation who had presented to the gastroenterology clinic at the Aja University of Medical Sciences, Iran. Sixty-six men with functional constipation were equally allocated to receive a synbiotic mixture (bifidobacterium, lactobacillus, streptococcus species and fructooligosaccharide) or a placebo. No adverse effects were reported from either group during the study period.

The results demonstrated that the symbiotic mixture seemed to be effective in increasing stool frequency and improving consistency in this sample of males suffering from mild to moderate constipation. In conclusion, the authors stated that the symbiotic mixture was safe and effective in improving stool frequency and consistency.¹

1 Fateh R, Iravani S, Frootan M, et al. Synbiotic preparation in men suffering from functional constipation: a randomised controlled trial. *Swiss Med Wkly*. 2011.