

# Women with chronic constipation have more bothersome urogenital symptoms

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## Abstract

**Background:** The aim of our study was to characterize urogenital symptoms in women with and without constipation, and by severity of constipation.

**Methods:** This was a retrospective cohort study conducted at a pelvic floor disorder centre in a tertiary healthcare facility from May 2007 through August 2019 and completed an intake questionnaire were included. We collected demographic, physical exam data and quality of life outcomes. The Urinary Distress Inventory (UDI-6) was used to assess urogenital symptoms. Women with constipation completed the Constipation Severity Instrument (CSI). We excluded women with a history of a bowel resection, inflammatory bowel disease, or pelvic organ prolapse symptoms. The cohort was then divided into two groups, constipated and non-constipated, and the prevalence and severity of urogenital-associated symptoms were compared. A secondary analysis was made among constipated subjects stratified by constipation severity based on CSI scores.

**Results:** During the study period, 875 women (59.5%) had chronic constipation. Women with chronic constipation were more likely to experience urogenital symptoms, such as dyspareunia, urinary hesitancy, and a sensation of incomplete bladder emptying (all  $p < 0.05$ ). Moreover, on univariate analysis, women with high CSI scores (75 percentile or higher) were found to have higher UDI-6 scores, increased bladder splinting, pad use, urinary frequency and dyspareunia while on multivariate analysis higher UDI score, increased bladder splinting, urinary frequency and dyspareunia were significantly associated ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** We found that the presence and severity of chronic constipation worsened the degree of bother from urogenital symptoms. Given that chronic constipation can modulate urogenital symptoms, our study suggests that pelvic floor specialists should assess the presence and severity of urogenital and bowel symptoms to provide comprehensive care

## Areas for reflection

- How can we improve the assessment of both bowel and urogenital symptoms within the one clinic setting?
- Do we need to improve the education and understanding of women on the link between bowel and bladder symptoms? Would this help individuals to take bowel management techniques more seriously?

You can find out more information about the clinical evidence behind chronic constipation on our website [here](#)

