



Vagus Nerve Stimulation (VNS) for Chronic Constipation: A Natural Approach

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The **vagus nerve** plays a crucial role in **digestive motility**, controlling the **peristaltic movement** of the intestines via the **gut-brain axis**. If vagal tone is low, the communication between the **brain and gut slows**, contributing to **chronic constipation, bloating, and sluggish digestion**.

Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS) can help by **enhancing gut motility, increasing digestive secretions, and reducing inflammation**—all of which support regular bowel movements.

How Vagus Nerve Stimulation Supports Digestion

✓ Enhances Peristalsis (Gut Motility)

- The vagus nerve stimulates the **enteric nervous system (ENS)**, which controls the movement of food through the intestines.
- Low vagal tone is linked to **slow-transit constipation** and **intestinal dysmotility**.
- VNS **increases acetylcholine**, a neurotransmitter that signals the gut to contract and move waste efficiently.

✓ Boosts Digestive Enzyme and Stomach Acid Production

- **Low stomach acid** leads to incomplete digestion and slow emptying.
- VNS helps **increase stomach acid (HCl) and digestive enzyme secretion**, improving food breakdown and motility.

✓ Reduces Inflammation in the Gut

- The vagus nerve activates the **cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway**, lowering inflammatory markers that may contribute to **irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and chronic constipation**.
- **Lower inflammation = improved gut function**.

✓ Balances the Gut Microbiome

- A well-functioning vagus nerve supports **gut-brain communication**, which influences the **microbiome**.
 - Poor vagal tone has been linked to **dysbiosis**, which can contribute to constipation.
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Methods to Stimulate the Vagus Nerve for Constipation Relief

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1. Non-Invasive Techniques

✓ Deep Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

- **How:** Inhale for **4-6 seconds**, hold briefly, exhale for **6-8 seconds** (longer exhale).
- **Why:** **Stimulates the vagus nerve**, increasing peristalsis and gut motility.

✓ Humming, Gargling, or Singing

- **How:** Gargle **vigorously** with water for **30-60 seconds**, hum deeply, or sing loudly.
- **Why:** Activates the vagus nerve via **throat and vocal cords**, promoting digestion.

✓ Cold Therapy

- **How:** Splash cold water on the face or use a **cold pack on the neck** for a few minutes.
- **Why:** Cold exposure stimulates vagal activity, **reducing gut sluggishness**.

✓ Acupressure & Auricular Stimulation

- **How:** Massage the **tragus (small cartilage near the ear opening)** for **30-60 seconds** or use an **ear VNS device**.
- **Why:** Stimulates the **auricular branch of the vagus nerve**, enhancing gut motility.

✓ Abdominal Massage

- **How:** Use **circular motions** around the navel, moving clockwise for **5 minutes**.
- **Why:** Stimulates **vagal activity and bowel motility**.

✓ Probiotics + Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- **How:** Supplement with **DHA-rich fish oil** and **high-quality probiotics**.
- **Why:** Omega-3s and probiotics improve vagal tone and **gut-brain communication**.

✓ Yoga & Gut-Specific Movements

- **How:** Try **child's pose, seated twists, and downward dog** before meals.
- **Why:** Enhances vagal activation and improves **bowel regularity**.

2. Electrical Vagus Nerve Stimulation (tVNS)

- **Transcutaneous VNS (tVNS) Devices:**
 - **Ear-based vagus nerve stimulators** (like Parasym or taVNS) have been shown to **enhance gut motility**. I often recommend the [Relaxus Acu-Massage Pen](#) following this technique: [Resetting the Vagus Nerve](#)
 - Studies suggest **auricular VNS** can **activate enteric nervous system function**, helping with **constipation and IBS**.
- **Implantable VNS (iVNS):**
 - Used in medical settings for epilepsy and depression but has been found to **improve bowel function as a secondary benefit**.

Scientific Evidence for VNS and Constipation

✓ **A 2020 study** found that **vagal nerve stimulation increased colonic motility**, improving symptoms in individuals with **gut motility disorders**.

✓ **A 2018 study on IBS** showed that **auricular VNS reduced constipation and bloating**, likely due to **increased parasympathetic activity**.

✓ **Research in Parkinson's disease** (where vagal dysfunction is common) has found that **VNS improves slow-transit constipation**.

Conclusion

Vagus nerve stimulation is a **promising, natural approach to chronic constipation**, especially in cases of **slow gut motility, IBS-C, or nervous system dysfunction**. By improving **peristalsis, gut-brain communication, and digestive enzyme production**, **VNS can help restore healthy bowel function**.

