

# Could a vibrating pill ease chronic constipation?

February 10 2023, by Cara Murez

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A new treatment for chronic constipation may bring relief without

having to use drugs.

It's a vibrating pill called Vibrant that stimulates the colon as it passes through the body.

Although the pill was [approved](#) by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration last August, doctors can start prescribing Vibrant this week.

"We are working right now with [insurance companies](#) to obtain coverage in commercial plans," Cathy Collis, chief commercial officer for Vibrant Gastro Inc., told *CNN*. "But until we get that coverage, our goal and commitment is to make sure that this is accessible and affordable to patients."

The company had to show the pills contained no [toxic materials](#), could withstand an accidental bite and didn't carry risk of infections, getting stuck, irritating tissues or interfering with other [medical devices](#), *CNN* reported.

A person prescribed the pill would take it at bedtime daily. The pill would then travel through the stomach and [small intestine](#) before reaching the large intestine about 14 hours later and stimulating nerve cells.

In doing this, it causes muscle contractions that move food out. The pill then leaves the body with the feces.

The pills are made of medical-grade material similar to what gastroenterologists use for pill cameras, *CNN* reported.

Vibrant is intended for the 10% to 20% of people who live with [chronic constipation](#), having fewer than three [bowel movements](#) each week for

unknown reasons and typically experiencing hard, painful stools.

To study the pill, 200 people with chronic constipation took Vibrant for eight weeks, while another 149 took a lookalike placebo.

In the group that took the actual Vibrant pills, 40% had at least one additional bowel movement each week, softer stools and less bloating. About 23% had two or more additional bowel movements weekly.

The placebo group also reported more bowel movements, with about 23% experiencing at least one more and 12% at least two or more additional bowel movements.

Still, the vibrations might feel a little funny as it moves through your body.

"A minority could feel it," Dr. Eamonn Quigley, chief of gastroenterology at Houston Methodist Hospital, told *CNN*. Quigley helped test the capsules, but he doesn't have any financial stake in the company. "None of them felt it was being uncomfortable. And none of them stopped taking it because of that."

While Quigley couldn't compare the Vibrant capsules to other constipation treatments because they weren't tested head to head in the study. But he added that the degree of relief seems similar to how prescription drugs for constipation perform.

Side effects appeared to be minimal and reported by more of those in the [placebo group](#) than in the vibrating pill group. The [pill](#) does not cause diarrhea, which isn't true of most prescription laxatives.

The pills are authorized to treat adults who have not been helped by other constipation medication or can't tolerate it. They are not meant for

people who have trouble swallowing, have paralysis of the stomach or have a history of bowel obstructions, *CNN* reported.

While Vibrant isn't covered by insurance, the company is capping out-of-pocket costs at \$69 by offering a coupon, *CNN* reported.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more on [constipation](#).

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