

Healthy Bowel

What is a healthy bowel?

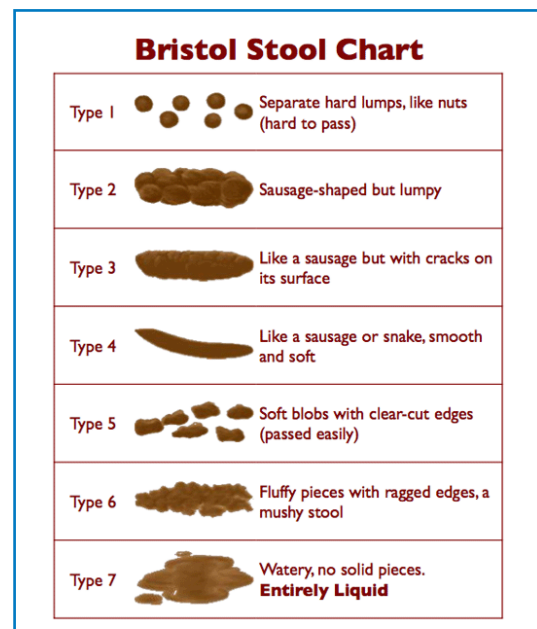
It is normal to pass a stool everyday up to every 3 days; stools should be soft and easy to pass. You should not need to strain to pass a stool. Some people pass a stool once a day and some twice these are both normal.

Bristol stool chart

This chart is a tool used by health care professionals to assess your stool and look for constipation. It is important to know what is normal for you, and your bowel.

Constipation Symptoms:

- feeling unwell
- bad breath
- bad taste in the mouth
- bloated
- reduced appetite
- difficulty concentrating



How to keep your bowel healthy?

Eating regularly through the day helps bowels to move, an empty stomach can cause excess gas, lead to gurgling and cause a wind filled stomach. Regular meals help to boost your metabolism. A healthy metabolism helps to promote a healthy weight and general health.

Exercise and movement helps to stimulate your bowel to move; it can also help to maintain a healthy weight. Pelvic floor exercises (sphincter muscle exercises) are also important they help to strengthen the muscles that you use to improve bowel control and reduce any incontinence.

Stay hydrated, dehydration can cause constipation and hard stools which can be difficult to pass. It is recommended that you drink around 1.5-2 litres of fluid per day. This should be increased when exercising and when the weather is hot to replace any fluids lost through sweat.

Sleep and rest is important to help maintain a healthy bowel, going to bed and resting at a similar time each day allows the digestive system to rest.

Stress can have an effect on our bowels causing an altered pattern of bowel movements limiting and or reducing stress where possible is key.

Don't defer needing to empty your bowels as this can cause constipation.

The bowel needs a good volume of fibre each to help stimulate the bowel and form a healthy stool. Try to eat whole foods and reduce processed foods where possible.

Foods that include fibre are wholegrains, wholemeal foods, potatoes with skins on, fruit and vegetables, pulses and lentils, nuts and seeds. Recommendation is around 30g of fibre per adult as per Department of Health. Examples include two slices of wholemeal toast with banana for breakfast. Jacket potato with skin and beans for lunch. Dinner options of wholegrain rice or pasta. Check labels on food packaging for fibre content and avoid high fat foods.

Why is fibre important?

Fibre helps to stimulate your bowel and assists in producing a healthy stool. Fibre rich foods are wholegrains, nuts and seeds, vegetables such as broccoli, carrots and sweetcorn. Potatoes with skin on. Oats and golden linseeds can help to improve bowel transit time, whole cloudy apple juice works as a natural laxative. You should aim for 30g of fibre per day as part of a balanced diet.

Elevating your feet when defecating can help to aid good emptying of your bowels, by placing your feet on a rolled up towel, bowl or a small step allows you to position yourself into a natural squat position. In this position you aid good rectal emptying and should not need to strain. Straining when passing a stool can cause bleeding and increase pressure on your rectal sphincter muscle which in some cases can cause a rectal prolapse. Using your breath exhaling when passing a stool can help to reduce straining.

When to seek help?

Blood in your stool or rectal bleeding, either on the toilet paper or in the toilet, there are a variety of different causes of rectal bleeding or blood in your stool. However small it is good to discuss this with your GP or health care provider, as the cause of this may need further investigation.

Unintentional weight loss over a period of time should be reported to your GP for further discussion.

Bloating which is abnormal for you, this can be continuous or after meals, which is not normal for you, or is occurring on a more frequent basis.

Increased pain in abdominal area or rectum.

Change in bowel habit, have your bowels become loose when they used to be formed or are they now hard and difficult to pass. Has the frequency of when you have your bowels opened changed.

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Bladder & Bowel Service
Ground Floor
Bowling Mill
Dean Clough
HX3 5WA

Telephone: 01484 343815

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"