



Healthy Bowel Habits

1. Eat all of your meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) at a predictable time each day. The bowel functions best when food is introduced at the same regular intervals.
2. Eat foods in similar amounts. The bowel functions best when food is in similar quantity. The size of different meals taken through the day may vary, but the amount of food eaten at a given meal (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) should be about the same quantity from day to day.
3. Breakfast is the most important meal involved in bowel stimulation. Make sure you eat breakfast every day.
4. Eat a high fiber diet that includes both soluble and insoluble fiber.
5. Keep caffeine to a minimum. Caffeine is a diuretic drawing fluid from your colon and leaving your stools hard.
6. Drink plenty of decaffeinated fluids. Ideally a person should drink 64 ounces a day or 8 glasses of water, especially if you are eating a fiber-rich diet. This may not be possible for people suffering from kidney disease, heart disease or urinary problems.
7. Exercise daily. Exercise increases colonic transit time. Bowel function is helped most when exercise is at a consistent daily time.

Bowel Movement Technique:

Find your best time of day to have a bowel movement. Usually the best time of day for a bowel movement will be a half hour to an hour after breakfast. For some people a half hour to an hour after lunch will work better. These times are best because the body uses the gastro-colic reflex, a stimulation of bowel motion that occurs with eating, to help produce a bowel movement. Make sure that you are not rushed and have convenient access to a bathroom at this time.

- Sit on toilet and lean forward, resting forearms on thighs. Lift heels or place feet on stool or Squatty Potty™
- Alternate position- may try leaning forward and grasping ankles.
- Relax rectum, feeling it slightly bulge outward.
- Keeping lips, jaw and mouth open will facilitate relaxation of the pelvic floor during your bowel movement.
- Breathe in through nose and exhale through mouth or perform gentle hissing through the teeth. Gently direct the air down and back to the rectum, keeping your abdomen firm.
- Post-partum patients or patients with perineal descent should place fingers externally on the perineum (area between vagina and rectum).
- When finished – contract pelvic floor muscles to restore normal pelvic floor tone. Repeat 3-4 times. If still unsuccessful, contract the pelvic floor and get off the toilet. Avoid straining.



Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Terri O'Neill RN, BSN
 Reviewer: Jenifer Crawford RN, BSN

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 03/2021