

## Constipation and colon care

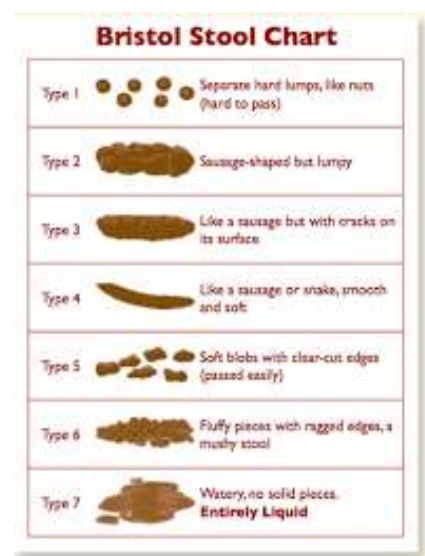
Constipation is a troublesome condition which saps the health of many.

Ideally, bowel movement should be twice a day (one for each main meal), easy to pass and of inoffensive odour (type 4 on the Bristol Stool Chart).

An adequate transit time is considered to be between 12 and 24 hours. You can test your own transit time by eating non digestible foods such as sweet corn and measuring the time it takes before it reappears in your stools.

Increased transit time leads to the stools becoming hard and more difficult to pass. Hardened stools indicate that the body has absorbed too much water alongside various toxic substances. This leads to the vicious circle of chronic constipation and its array of unpleasant symptoms such as:

- Bad breath
- Headaches / migraines
- Backache
- Coated tongue
- Lack of energy
- Colic and gas
- Poor skin conditions
- Haemorrhoids and varicose veins



If left untreated these symptoms may lead to more serious conditions such as diverticular disease

Many people use laxatives as a preventive method but quickly become dependent and suffer the side-effects associated with laxative abuse such as:

- Irritated (Colon) mucosa
- Dependency and worse constipation
- Poor bowel flora
- Kidney disease
- Lazy colon and inappropriate muscle tone
- Depression

### **Laxatives are not the answer!!**

**Constipation can often easily be corrected by adopting the appropriate measures**

#### **A. Potty training and squatting**

Many people have lost all awareness of “the need to go” due to repeatedly ignoring the call of nature. The best method to retrain your emptying reflex is to make a point every morning after a hot drink (caffeinated is best for this) of going to spend 3 to 5 minutes on the toilet in a relaxed position. To help the process further, sit on the toilet with your knees higher than your hips and your arms above your head. This can be achieved by raising your feet (i.e. on a telephone book or small stool) and crossing your hands above your head. These exercises need to be followed, regardless of results, for at least a month.

#### **B. Stress management**

Stress has many detrimental effects on digestion and often contributes to constipation.

Avoid eating under stress. Mindful Eating is a powerful method of controlling digestion and elimination. It is better not to eat if you are arguing or in a great hurry. Avoid eating whilst watching television, listening to the radio or reading. Instead, concentrate on chewing your food and on what you are eating.

We ALL have to manage our stress levels be it a favourite yoga class, meaning full interactions with friends and family, regular “me” time or a hobby. Managing stress away from computer and phone screens takes time and requires commitment but will pay dividends on the whole of your health and well-being.

## C. Exercises

Lack of exercise contributes to constipation.

All core exercises are helpful. Abdominal exercises on a slanted board counteract the negative effects that gravity plays on the transverse colon thus aiding elimination.

Stretching, especially, of the back, abdominal muscles and waist is useful to alleviate the effect of sitting and slouching.

Bouncing on a trampoline is a safe and sound form of exercise which contributes to good healthy elimination. Ten minutes twice a day is usually sufficient to make positive changes to elimination and general health. Mini trampolines from Argos are affordable and can easily be used at home or in the office

## D. Diet

Dietary factors play a significant part in constipation.

To manage the bowel we need to hydrate it and bulk up the stools and nourish the bowel flora

### To hydrate the bowel:

- a) Have plenty of fresh, organic vegetables, every day. To hydrate the bowel, we must eat our water not just drink it.
- b) Drink plenty of filtered/spring water. Herbal teas and warm water all contribute to hydration
- c) Keep away from dehydrating beverages such as alcohol and coke

### To bulk up the stools:

- a) Eat unprocessed and unrefined (preferably organic) foods such as whole grain, nuts, pulses, etc.
- b) Take soaked linseeds every morning. As much as two desert spoons may be used. Both, the water and the seeds should be consumed. Alternatively add ground flax to your favourite breakfast.
- c) Water holding fibre from oat bran, psyllium husk and chia seeds are all helpful in bulking

### Foods known to slow transit time are:

- a) Meat especially red meat
- b) Gluten found in grains such as wheat, spelt, rye, barley
- c) Casein found in dairy especially hard/cooked cheese

### A lot of the bulk in stool is in fact bacteria. Support your bowel flora with:

- a) A probiotic supplement. Spore probiotics are particularly helpful here
- b) Fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kefir and kombucha
- c) Resistant Starch (RS) found in cold potatoes, green bananas, well-chewed brown rice