

Bowel problems men

What are normal bowel habits?

Normal bowel emptying occurs between three times a day and three times a week.

You should be able to hold on for a short time after you first feel the urge to empty your bowels so that you have time to get to the toilet. Your stool (poo) should be well-formed and soft.

It is normal to be able to empty your bowels within 3-4 minutes of sitting down without straining or pain, and you should feel fully emptied when you finish.

Common bowel conditions

- Constipation – opening bowels less than three times per week, regularly having hard stools, straining to start or complete bowel motion, or feeling incompletely empty
- Urgency – having to rush to the toilet for bowel motion. If you don't make it in time and have an accident, this is referred to as urge faecal incontinence
- Faecal incontinence - loss of bowel control resulting in leakage from the bowel or a bowel accident. Loss of control can refer to gas, liquid or solid wastes (stool).

Good bowel habits

To maintain soft and regular bowel motions:

1. Drink at least 1.5-2 litres of fluids (preferably water) each day.
2. Eat plenty of high fibre foods (including balance of soluble and insoluble fibre) and have a balance of 'wet' (fruits, veggies) and 'dry' (pasta, bread) foods
 - *Soluble fibre* – found in the soft insides of plants (eg. Oats, barley, psyllium, berries, fruit seeds). **Soluble fibre** helps to slow the emptying process in our stomachs, which helps you feel fuller
 - *Insoluble fibre*- found in the skeleton of plants (eg. Bran, wheat-based food, cauliflower, cabbage, fruit skins, nuts, legumes. Insoluble fiber draws water into your stool, making it softer and easier to pass. It also helps to bulk up your stool to speed up movement through gut.
3. Get sufficient gentle exercise, such as walking, to overcome the effects of slowed bowel activity after surgery.
4. On the toilet, sit leaning forward and allow your tummy to bulge and relax (see below)
5. Listen to your urges to use your bowels. Take your time when emptying your bowels and go within 10 minutes of getting to urge to go.

Emptying the Bowels

Learning the right way to empty the bowel without straining is important.

Sitting correctly on the toilet:

- Lean forwards and rest elbows on knees, keeping spine straight
- Legs wide apart – toes down, heels up
- Knees should be higher than hips - if legs are shorter use a foot stool
- Bulge the abdomen out gently so it is soft – this will help the deep sphincters to release and opens to funnel
- Make the waist wide (say 'sss') with each urge
- Make sure the upper tummy doesn't tighten up
- Keep your lips open and your teeth apart, breathe out
- Pull up your muscles around the back passage when you have finished emptying



Healthy bladder habits

Normal bladder habits

- Going to the toilet 4-6 times a day (or every 3-4 hours) and no more than once per night
- First desire to go when the bladder is holding approximately 200 – 250mls
- Having enough warning and time to find a toilet once the bladder feels full
- Completely emptying at each toilet visit, without straining or rushing
- No leakage
- No pain with either filling or emptying
- Maximum capacity of 400 – 550mls

You can help your bladder to behave normally by following these guidelines.

Healthy Bladder habits:

- Aim to drink between 1.5 – 2 litres of fluid per day – our bladders prefer this to be mainly water
- Minimise fluid intake in the 2-3 hours before bed
- Reduce irritant intake – caffeine, alcohol and artificial sweeteners can all irritate the bladder and cause urgency and leakage
 - Carbonated drinks, citrus juice and spicy foods can also do this to a lesser degree
- Listen to your bladder and go with a good urge, not ‘just in case’ – the bladder works best when it is allowed to fill and empty normally
- Take your time, don’t rush!
- If you have some after dribble milking the urethra with firm pressure behind the testicles milking any last drips into the urethra and finishing with a strong pelvic floor muscle contraction can help
- Always go to the toilet before just before bedtime
- Practice good bowel habits
 - Avoid constipation and straining which can irritate the bladder and weaken the pelvic floor
- Exercise and maintain healthy body weight
- Stop smoking – nicotine can irritate the bladder causing urgency; smoking is one of the leading causes of bladder cancer