



Physical Therapy

Healthy Bowel Habits

- 1) Find your best time of day to have a bowel movement. Usually the best time of day for a bowel movement will be 30-60 minutes after breakfast. For some people, 30-60 minutes after lunch will work better. These times are best because the body uses gastro-colic reflex, a stimulation of bowel motion that occurs with eating, to help produce a bowel movement.
- 2) Breakfast is the most important meal involved in bowel stimulation. Make sure you eat breakfast every day.
- 3) Make sure that you are not rushed and have convenient access to a bathroom at this time.
- 4) 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.
- 5) 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.
- 6) Eat a high fiber diet that includes both soluble and insoluble **fiber**.
- 7) Keep caffeine to a minimum. Caffeine is a diuretic drawing fluid from your colon and leaving your stools hard. Decaffeinated coffee will stimulate bowels the same way caffeinated coffee does.
- 8) Drink plenty of fluids! Ideally a person should drink **64 ounces** a day or **8 glasses of water**.
- 9) Exercise daily. Exercise increases colonic transit time. Bowel function is helped most when exercise is at a consistent daily time.

Bowel Movement Technique

- Sit on toilet and lean forward, resting forearms on thighs. Lift heels or place feet on stool.
- 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.**