

## Good Bowel Habits

Most of us have used correct bladder and bowel emptying patterns when we were small children. In early adulthood we are very active and have good pelvic muscle and organ support. Problems may start as we get older due to a history of chronic constipation, chronic coughs, repeated heavy lifting, childbirth and the onset of menopause, all of which serve to weaken the support mechanism of the pelvic organs. The result can be that we strain to empty our bowels. Learning the best way to empty the bowels without straining is very important.

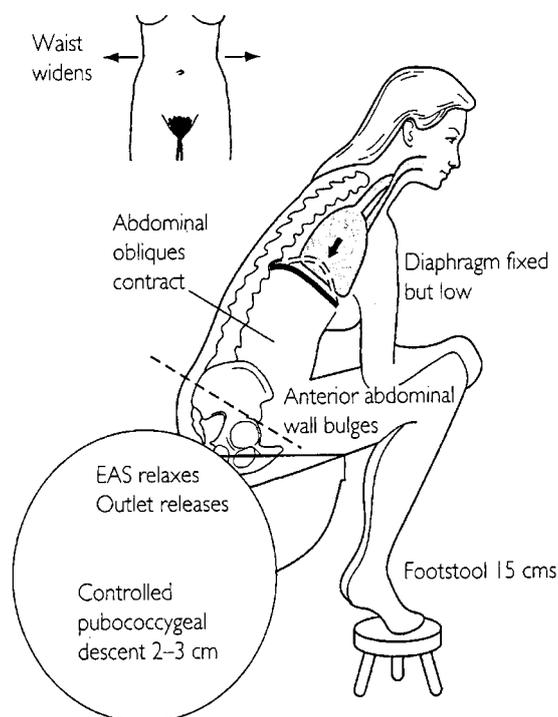
- Sit correctly on the toilet:
  - Keeping your back straight, lean forwards.
  - Rest your forearms along your knees.
  - Pull your feet underneath you and raise them on your toes.
  - A small footstool may help until you get used to it.
  - Legs apart.
- Brace - make your waist widen. Allow your deep corset muscles of the abdomen to relax forwards. As you do this, the deep sphincter muscles relax to encourage funnelling of the rectum.
- With each urge to empty your bowel, repeat the above process.
- Keep your mouth slightly open and breathe out. **Do not hold your breath.**
- As you finish emptying, pull up the anorectal muscles. This improves the closing reflex.

### Normal bowel habits

- Anything from three times a day to three times a week.
- A well formed stool, a smooth and cohesive paste that is easy to pass.
- A diet high in soluble low residue fibre is best, eg. pasta, rice, vegetables and fruit.
- A diet high in insoluble residue fibre, eg. bran, wholemeal products and muesli, can cause problems by bulking up the stool and making it harder to pass.
- Some fruit juices, pear, apple and prune, assist normal bowel function.

### Fluid Intake

- Drink up to eight glasses of fluid per day which can be made up of water, milk, soups, juices and decaffeinated drinks.
- Limit caffeine drinks to two per day.



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