



Bowel Norms & Tips



The consistency and ease of passing a bowel movement are good indicators of bowel health. Frequency can vary from 3 times per day to 3 times per week.



The goal is **type 4 on Bristol Stool Scale with zero straining.**

TYPE 1



Separate hard lumps, like nuts (**hard to pass**).

TYPE 2



Sausage-shaped but lumpy.

TYPE 3



Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface.

TYPE 4



Like a sausage, smooth and soft.

TYPE 5



Soft blobs with clear-cut edges.

TYPE 6



Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool.

TYPE 7



Watery, no solid pieces, and entirely liquid.



You can change bowel type by altering the **length of time the stool is stored in the colon** (hydration, laxatives, dietary irritants) and with fiber that will change the **consistency of the stool**.

Eat 25-35 grams of fiber per day.

Start with whole, minimally processed foods or use a supplement. Increase fiber slowly as it could contribute to gas and bloating.

Fiber does not cause increased contractions from the intestines. It creates a larger stool bolus which will trigger the need to defecate sooner in the case of constipation and it can help improve bowel urgency with softer stools or diarrhea by improving stool consistency.

For stools that are hard, dry, or difficult to pass:

Sorbitol is a natural fruit sugar which has a laxative effect as it draws fluid into the intestine and increases intestinal contractions.

Foods high in sorbitol include: pears, fruits with pits including peaches, plums, and apricots, dried fruit including prunes and dates, apples, and grapes.

Increase water intake with minimum goal of 64 ounces fluids per day. If you are not drinking enough water, your body will reclaim fluids from waste making your stools move slower and become harder.

Drink little or no caffeine, which is a diuretic. It can leave your stools hard and difficult to pass.

To help alleviate straining, try placing feet on a step stool or "squatty potty" and leaning forward to close the hip angle. This releases tension in the deepest pelvic floor layer. Do not hold your breath and push down. Instead, take small "sips" of air in and out.

For loose stools or diarrhea:

Try to avoid offending foods. Certain foods may worsen diarrhea and accidental bowel leakage such as lactose, artificial sweeteners, carbonated beverages, and spicy or greasy foods. Keep a food diary to help recognize foods which may be worsening your symptoms.

Coffee often stimulates the bowels – if you have problems with urgency or accidental bowel leakage, stop drinking coffee.