

# Healthy Bowel Habits

Breakfast is the most important meal involved in bowel stimulation. Make sure you eat breakfast every day.

To avoid constipation eat a balanced diet, this includes both

- Soluble fibre (oat bran, barley, nuts, seeds, beans, lentils, peas, and some fruits and vegetables).
- Insoluble fibre (wheat bran, vegetables, and whole grains).

Keep caffeine to a minimum. Caffeine is a diuretic drawing fluid from your colon and can cause your stools to become firm.

Drink plenty of decaffeinated fluids, mainly water. Ideally a person should drink 6-8 glasses of fluid, especially if you are eating a fibre-rich diet.

Exercise daily. Exercise increases colonic transit time. Bowel function is helped most when exercise is at a consistent daily time.

Avoid putting off your bowel motion too long when you get the urge. The longer the faeces remains in the bowels the more dehydrated it becomes, making it firmer and more difficult to pass.

Make time for your bowels, most bowels respond to a regular habit. About 30 minutes after eating is the most likely time for the bowel to work.

Take your time on the toilet, try not to rush.

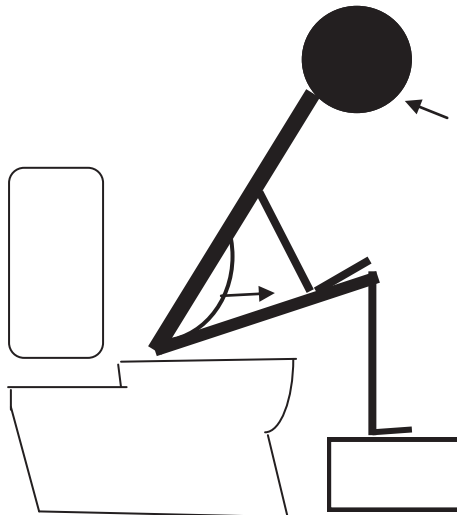
## Position for emptying your bowels

Sit on toilet with knees higher than hips – try using a small stool to lift them keeping your feet flat.

- Lean forward keeping your spine/back straight.
- Knees apart.
- Lean on your elbows.
- Relax your abdominals/ tummy muscles.
- As you breathe in your tummy should bulge out slightly.
- Breathe out.

This position helps to relax the muscles that close off the back passage and put your bowel in a position where gravity can assist the motion.

It will be easier to empty when you get the first urge. This is often the best time to empty (*except post –colorectal surgery- speak with your Doctor or Physiotherapist*).



*The Bay of Plenty District Health Board has an active commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi  
and the improvement of Māori health.*

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