

Tips for Healthy Bowel Movements

In this handout, you will learn about healthy bowel movements and how to help if there is trouble with bowel movements. Guidelines on how to prevent constipation and maintain a healthy digestive system are on the back of this handout. The care team can provide you with a chart to help track bowel movements.








WHAT IS A HEALTHY BOWEL MOVEMENT?

Healthy bowel movements can be described as 1-2 stools a day that are easily passed. The stools have the texture of peanut butter or mashed potato.

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO HELP WITH REGULAR HEALTHY BOWEL MOVEMENTS

- Eat lots of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. In addition, drink plenty of fluids. When combined with plenty of fluids, the fiber in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can make it easier to have more regular bowel movements.
- Limit milk and dairy because they can be constipating. It is also best to stay away from processed foods.
- Encourage taking part in enjoyed physical activity for at least 30 minutes per day.
- Create a regular **sitting plan** with the care team (planned time to sit on the toilet to help bowel movements come on a regular schedule and prevent constipation).

HERE IS A CHART OF DIFFERENT BOWEL MOVEMENTS. THIS IS A STOOL CHART.

Type	What it means	What it looks like	Description
Type 1	Constipation (too hard)		Separate hard lumps that are hard to pass
Type 2	Constipation (too hard)		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3	Healthy (goal)		Sausage-shaped with cracks on the surface
Type 4	Healthy (goal)		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5	Healthy (goal)		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges, easy to pass
Type 6	Diarrhea (too loose)		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, mushy
Type 7	Diarrhea (too loose)		Watery with no solid pieces

WHEN THERE IS TROUBLE WITH BOWEL MOVEMENTS, THE CARE TEAM SUGGESTS:

In addition to following general healthy guidelines, the care team recommends staying on a “**maintenance**” bowel plan to keep regular and healthy bowel movements. Follow the plan every day to prevent constipation from causing a backup of stool.

Here is the daily plan prescribed for: _____

Stool softener

We usually suggest Miralax® (polyethylene glycol)

How it works:

Moves water from the body to the intestines to soften stool. Miralax® is safe to use in both children and adults.

How to give Miralax®:

1. Check the Bristol Stool Chart to see which type of bowel movement the care team is treating.
2. Mix _____ capfuls / teaspoons with a favorite drink. Give _____ times per day.
**When using Miralax®, 1 capful = 4 teaspoons*
3. After a few days, adjust the dose of Miralax® up or down, depending on the type of bowel movement.
 - **For bowel movements Type 1 and 2**, increase Miralax® by _____ more until bowel movements reach Type 3, 4 or 5.
 - **For bowel movements Type 6 and 7**, decrease Miralax® by _____ less, until bowel movements reach Type 3, 4 or 5.

If more than 24-48 hours (1-2 days) has passed without a bowel movement, add: _____.

Stimulant laxatives

We suggest a variety of over-the-counter medications. Find one that works well for the individual's needs.

How these work:

Helps the muscles in the colon (large intestine) contract to move stool out of the body.

How to give stimulant laxative

How you give stimulant laxatives depends on which kind you give. Depending on the need, give daily or as directed by the care team.

Choose just **ONE** of the following:

- Senna or Ex-Lax®: _____ tablets/squares
- Dulcolax® or bisacodyl: _____ tablets
- Magnesium Natural Calm®: Mix _____ teaspoons into a favorite drink.
- Magnesium oxide tablets: _____ tablets
- Pedia-Lax®: _____ watermelon chews

If more than 24-48 hours (1-2 days) has passed without a bowel movement, add _____.

MassGeneral Hospital for Children and Massachusetts General Hospital do not endorse any of the brands listed on this handout. This handout is intended to provide health information so that you can be better informed. It is not a substitute for medical advice and should not be used to treatment of any medical conditions.

Lurie Center for Autism

Mass General Hospital for Children
1 Maguire Road
Lexington, MA 02421

www.massgeneralforchildren.org/lurie-center

For more information please call

781-860-1700

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