

BOWEL: TOILET HABITS: When To Go

Keep a bowel log for 1 week to determine if you have a pattern of when you tend to go during the day. If a pattern emerges, begin to work around that time.

If not, attempt a bowel movement 10 - 20 minutes after a meal. This utilizes a response in your body called the gastrocolic reflex. There is a mass movement of the contents of your bowels several minutes after eating. It is most active after breakfast.

Don't ignore the urge to go. Chronically delaying the urge to have a bowel movement can contribute to constipation. Listen to what your body is telling you.

Don't rush a bowel movement. Be prepared to sit for 15 - 20 minutes.

How To Sit (Toilet Posture)

Toilets do not promote the best posture to have a bowel movement, especially if you are short.

Avoid a rounded spine, dangling feet, and closed legs.

Tips:

Sit on toilet with knees more than shoulder width apart.

Put knees above your hips, either by raising heels or by using a footstool or thick book.

Lean body forward, resting forearms on thighs.

How to Go - Push, Do Not Strain

Avoid straining and breath holding.

Bearing down while holding your breath is called a Valsava Maneuver.

It may feel like the quickest and most effective way to pass a bowel movement, but it can be very taxing on your heart and circulatory system.

Instead, when the urge comes, exhale as you bulge the lower abdomen letting your waist widen.

Other Tips

Relax: Many muscles in your body have to relax to allow a bowel movement to occur. If you attempt a bowel movement in a rushed, hurried state of mind, you will likely have difficulty. Try some of the following to relax yourself: read a book, listen to music, breath deeply (diaphragmatic).

Squat: Before there were toilets, humans used to squat to defecate. Try a deep squat or a modified squatting position for a few minutes prior to sitting on the toilet. This will help relax the pelvic floor and other muscles surrounding the rectum.

*Visualize....*your pelvic floor muscles and anus opening wide. Imagine a circle getting larger, a smooth marble rolling out of your rectum, an elevator descending to the ground floor.