

Constipation and Diarrhea: What Is Your Bowel Movement Telling You?

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As it turns out, what comes out of the body is just as important as what goes in.

It is possible for psychological stress to generate constipation.

In other words, the frequency, consistency, and color of your stool can be important markers of disharmony or disease.

Learning to understand what your bowel movements are telling you can empower you to make healthier choices in diet and lifestyle!

Constipation

The more time that waste material spends in the colon, the drier it becomes. According to the Bristol Stool Scale, when stool is hard to pass, this may indicate constipation. When stools are lumpy and small or nut-sized, it can also be a sign that you could benefit from a speedier transit time.

In the ancient tradition of Chinese medicine, bowel movement frequency and stool consistency help a practitioner to identify the underlying cause of a disorder. When it comes to constipation, key signs can signal what is necessary to bring the body back into balance.

- **Heat:** Often, when there is heat in the body, there is some degree of toxicity or inflammation. A strong odor usually accompanies constipation that is marked by heat. If you feel thirsty often, this could mean that your body is struggling to balance excessive heat.
- **Stagnation:** Stagnation that leads to constipation generally involves *Liver energy*. In Chinese medicine, the Liver governs the smooth flow of energy throughout the entire body. If the Liver is

overwhelmed or exhausted, this can result in constipation. One sign that the Liver may be involved is when constipation is accompanied by acid regurgitation or gas.

When constipation involves Liver energy, it is essential to address stress.

Because the Liver regulates the smooth flow of energy throughout the body, a congested Liver can mean congested energy. As it turns out, in Chinese medicine the Liver also plays a large role in our emotional balance.

This means that it is possible for psychological stress to generate constipation.

In western physiology, we know that digestion does not begin in the mouth - it begins first **in the mind**. The sight, smell, and thought of food stimulate the release of neurotransmitters, which kick start digestion by increasing gastric acid in the stomach.

When we get stressed or enter fight-or-flight mode, all of this digestive activity comes to a halt! This is why the act of prayer before meals or even a quiet moment of gratitude is a practice that can optimize digestion and elimination.

Diarrhea

The Bristol Stool Scale characterizes loose stools or diarrhea as ranging from soft, fluffy masses to entirely liquid.

From the perspective of Chinese medicine, loose stools and diarrhea are usually signs of coldness or deficiency in the body. This is especially true when stools are regularly loose and formless.

Stools that are loose with undigested particles of food indicate a weakness in the Earth element, which governs the digestive force of the body. When laxative teas or over-the-counter laxative medications promote loose stools with undigested food particles, this is a sign that the laxative is draining your digestive force!

If you notice loose stools on a regular basis, this may be an indication of a deeper problem with the lining of the gut wall and your inner ecology. A gut healing protocol can begin to heal inflammation and correct any imbalance in gut bacteria. This means:

- **Choosing vegetables that are either fermented or well-cooked over raw.** [Fermented vegetables](#) are predigested. In other words, beneficial bacteria have done some of the work for you! When you choose fermented vegetables, you are also updating your inner ecology with a dose of these beneficial bugs.

When vegetables are well-cooked, this leaves little fiber for gut bacteria to feed on. **Too much** fiber can feed bacteria in the wrong places, and this can contribute to diarrhea or alternating constipation and diarrhea.

- **Drink [probiotic beverages](#).** Another easy way to transform your inner ecology is to introduce active enzymes and living beneficial bacteria from probiotic beverages like [InnergyBiotic](#) and [CocoBiotic](#).
- **Drink bone broth.** Bone broth is exceptionally healing for the mucosa lining the wall of the gastrointestinal tract. It contains special amino acids that assist in the repair of the gut wall, as well as other protein-based nutrients - like collagen - that improve skin texture and nourish the joints.
- **Consume L-glutamine.** L-glutamine is an amino acid that research has found to be incredibly healing for the gut mucosa. It

feeds the cells of the small intestine and can help to improve intestinal permeability. (1) Bone broth contains l-glutamine. And so does [Body Ecology's Vitality SuperGreen](#). In fact, Body Ecology's blend contains Glutimmune, which is 10 times as potent as l-glutamine.

Floating Stool

Stool that floats is a sign that your body is not digesting fats well. Green or white clay-colored stool may be an indication that the liver or gallbladder is under stress.

If you suspect that you may have an issue with digesting fats, or if you have had your gallbladder removed, it may help to incorporate **ox bile** into your lifestyle as a supplement. Ox bile, like our own bile, can help the body to break down fat into usable pieces.

When the liver becomes congested with too much work and toxicity, we can nourish the liver directly with herbs like milk thistle, which has been found to benefit many extreme states of liver disease, ranging from cirrhosis to viral hepatitis. This is largely due to an antioxidant group known as **silymarin**.

Body Ecology has a formulation called [LivAmend](#), which also includes other powerful antioxidant herbs like artichoke, wasabi, and sarsaparilla, in addition to milk thistle. Together, these herbs boost antioxidant levels in the liver tissue while encouraging bile flow.

Newborns and Infants

When it comes to newborn babies and infants, it is important to remember that for the first several months of life their gastrointestinal tract is **leaky** or permeable. In an adult, this would be a sign of inflammation. However, babies are designed to have a permeable

intestinal wall. This allows the mother's breast milk and the environment to educate the baby's immune system.

- **Green-Black and Tarry Stool:** Within their first few days of life, newborns will pass stool that is thick and tarry. Otherwise known as meconium, this first stool is naturally thick, sticky, and dark.
- **Yellow and Clumpy or Pasty Stool:** Breastfed babies have stool that is mustard yellow in color. It can range from watery with clumpy pieces to a thick paste. Formula-fed babies have stool that is brown and pasty to firm in texture.
- **Constipation or Diarrhea:** You may find that your infant's stool is watery and full of seed-like bits one day and then four days pass with no movement at all. Do not worry. As long as your little one is eating, urinating, sleeping, and not running a temperature, everything is okay. Because babies have a permeable intestinal wall and because their inner ecosystem is still developing, it's not abnormal for an infant to have watery stool or go through bouts of constipation.

If you would like to encourage regular bowel movements and a healthy inner ecosystem, focus first on yourself. This means to make sure that you are eating fermented foods that are full of beneficial bacteria. You can also help to inoculate your baby's gut with beneficial bacteria by placing a drop or two of cultured veggie juice on your baby's lips.

Ideally...

While each one of us has a distinct personal history that shapes our health and our dietary needs, we all need to get rid of waste. And we all need to do so on a regular basis.

In spite of our unique differences, a healthy bowel movement has a few key features that can apply to almost everyone. As you make changes in

your diet and in your lifestyle, you may notice changes in your stool. You know that you are on the right track when a bowel movement:

- **Happens Daily:** If you think that a regular and healthy bowel movement happens every 2-3 days, you are not alone. Many of us believe that it is normal to have a movement every other day. In reality, a healthy bowel movement happens **every day**. And for some of us, after every meal.
- **Has a Clean Wipe:** Stool should leave the body easily and cleanly. If you find that there is a wet or sticky residue, this may be an indication of intestinal parasites or gut inflammation.
- **Has Little Odor:** In Chinese medicine, odor is a sign of heat and toxicity in the body. Unless you are on a protocol to deeply cleanse the body, there should be little odor with elimination.
- **Is Well-Formed:** A well-formed stool is not too dry but still has a smooth shape. When stools are well-formed, this is a good indicator that transit time is on point!