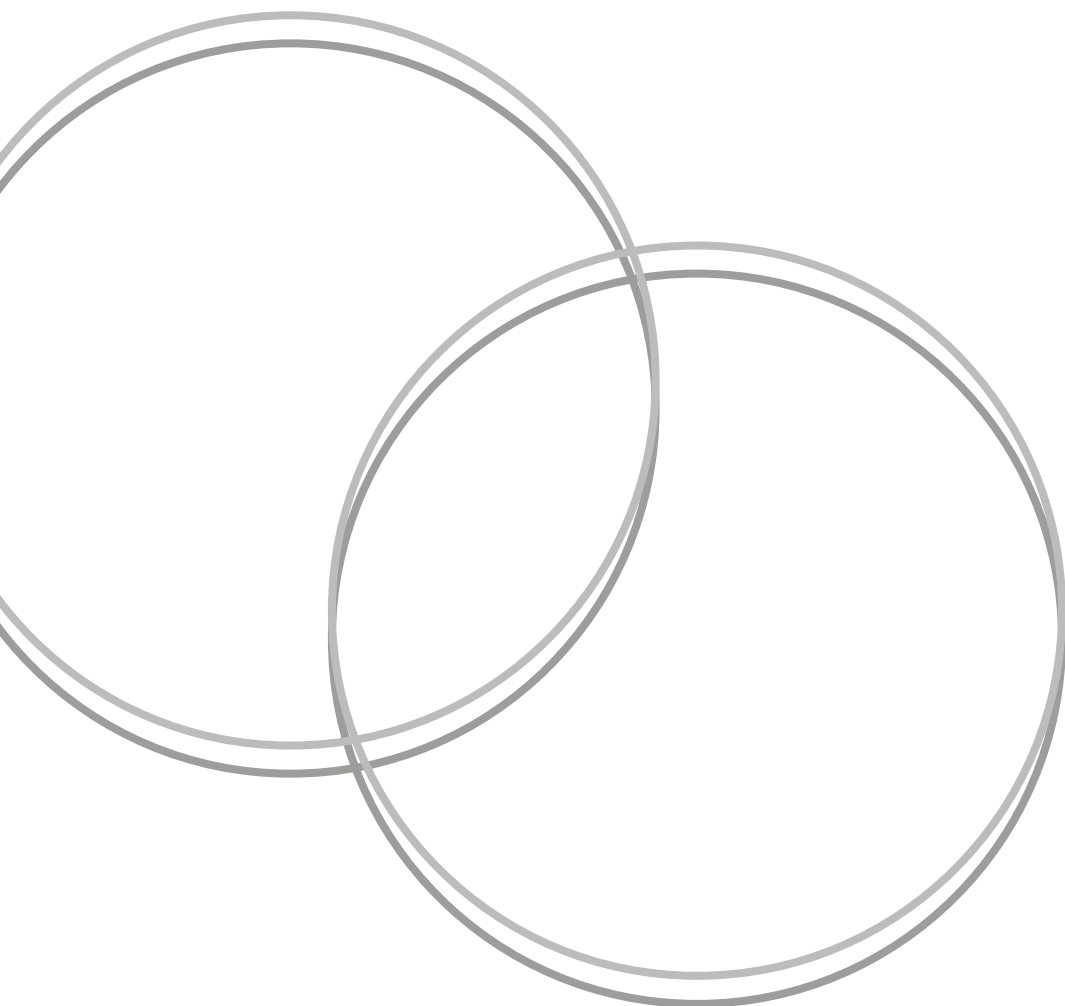


Obstructed defaecation

Information for patients



What is obstructed defaecation?

Obstructed defaecation is the inability to pass stools easily through your bottom. You may often feel like you have not managed to empty fully, despite the stool being soft and your bowels opening regularly. This is slightly different to constipation, where your stools may be very hard and your bowel motions infrequent.

However, it is possible to experience both of these problems together.

It can also be caused by a tight anal sphincter, a weakening in the wall of your rectum, or poor control of your pelvic floor muscles.

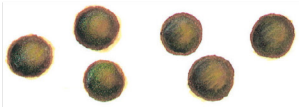






Often, obstructive defaecation is a result of many years of problems, so the treatment will require commitment and persistence to achieve results.

What is a normal bowel motion?

A normal stool is usually brown in colour, although this can vary depending on the foods you have eaten. How often you go can vary from between three times a day to three times a week.

Normal consistency of stools should be soft and formed (Bristol Stool Form Scale type 3 or 4). The chart opposite shows more details.

THE BRISTOL STOOL FORM SCALE

<i>Type 1</i>		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
<i>Type 2</i>		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
<i>Type 3</i>		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
<i>Type 4</i>		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
<i>Type 5</i>		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
<i>Type 6</i>		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
<i>Type 7</i>		Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID

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Treatment

Obstructed defaecation can be managed with pelvic floor relaxation techniques, toilet positioning and dietary adjustments. Occasionally medication to soften or bulk your stools will be recommended.

Medication

Your healthcare professional will discuss any medication requirements with you on an individual basis.

Diet

You should eat a healthy balanced diet which will be discussed in more detail at your appointment depending on your difficulties. It is important to drink between 1.5 to 2 litres of water per day (2 and a half to 3 and a half pints).

Brace and pump technique

This is the recommended technique to help you to open your bowels more effectively.

How to brace

Your waist muscles are the muscles you can push/propel (move) with. These muscles can be used to help you to open your bowels.

Place your hands on either side of your waist – now cough. Can you feel the muscles work? These are the muscles you will use when carrying out the brace and pump technique.

Once you've identified these muscles, you should do the following exercise every day, to help you achieve a normal bowel habit.

The exercise *(see page 6 for diagrams)*

Every day set aside approximately 10 minutes so you are not rushed, preferably half an hour after breakfast or after your evening meal. It is important that you are not interrupted.

1. Check you are sitting in the correct position on the toilet.

Lean forward with your forearms resting on your thighs and your feet raised on a small block (like a toddler step). This is a key part of this exercise, as this puts you in the best position for emptying your bowels. It is important that your knees are positioned higher than your hips.

2. Relax, lower your shoulders and breathe slowly and gently.

Try to let go and relax all of your muscles.

3. Now, try to open your bowels.

Remember not to hold your breath, i.e. do not take a big breath in first.

- Imagine your back passage is a lift, resting on the first floor.
- Slowly push the lift down to the ground floor, basement and finally the cellar.
- Take the lift down as far as it will go.
- Relax for a second. Do not allow your lift to rise.
- Slowly brace outwards (widen your waist). When your waist is fully braced push/propel from your waist back and downwards into your back passage.
- **Do not strain your muscles in your back passage**
– let your tummy muscles do the work.
- Relax for one second, but only very slightly. You must maintain a level of pressure with your brace, whilst not actively pushing with it.
- Brace outwards and push downwards again. Repeat the one second pause and then pushing downwards (the pumping part of the exercise) for 10 minutes, or until your bowels have opened.

If you do not pass a stool do not worry. Try again the following day or when you feel the urge to open your bowels. Normal bowel patterns are different for everyone.

Correct position for opening your bowels

Step one



Knees higher than hips

Step two



Lean forwards and put elbows on your knees

Step three



Bulge out your abdomen
Straighten your spine

Correct position



Knees higher than hips
Lean forwards and put elbows on your knees
Bulge out your abdomen
Straighten your spine

Keep trying

If you have had this problem for many years, it will not be solved overnight, so keep trying. These exercises take time and practice.

Pelvic floor muscle exercises

You will find that completing pelvic floor muscle exercises as well as the exercise shown on page 6 will help you achieve a normal toileting function.

The pelvic floor is a sheet of muscles that extend from your tail bone (coccyx) to your pubic bone at the front, forming a “platform” between your legs. They support the bladder, bowel and uterus (in women). The pelvic floor muscles help to control when you pass urine and open your bowels. Having strong, effective pelvic floor muscles can improve or stop any leakage from your bowels.

Please see separate patient information leaflets: **A guide to the pelvic floor muscles. Information for men/women.**

How to contact us

If you have any questions or need advice please contact us, either by telephone or email.

Telephone: **01865 235 881**

Email: pelvicfloor.advice@ouh.nhs.uk

Useful contacts

The Pelvic Floor Society patient information leaflets

Website: www.thepelvicfloorsociety.co.uk

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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