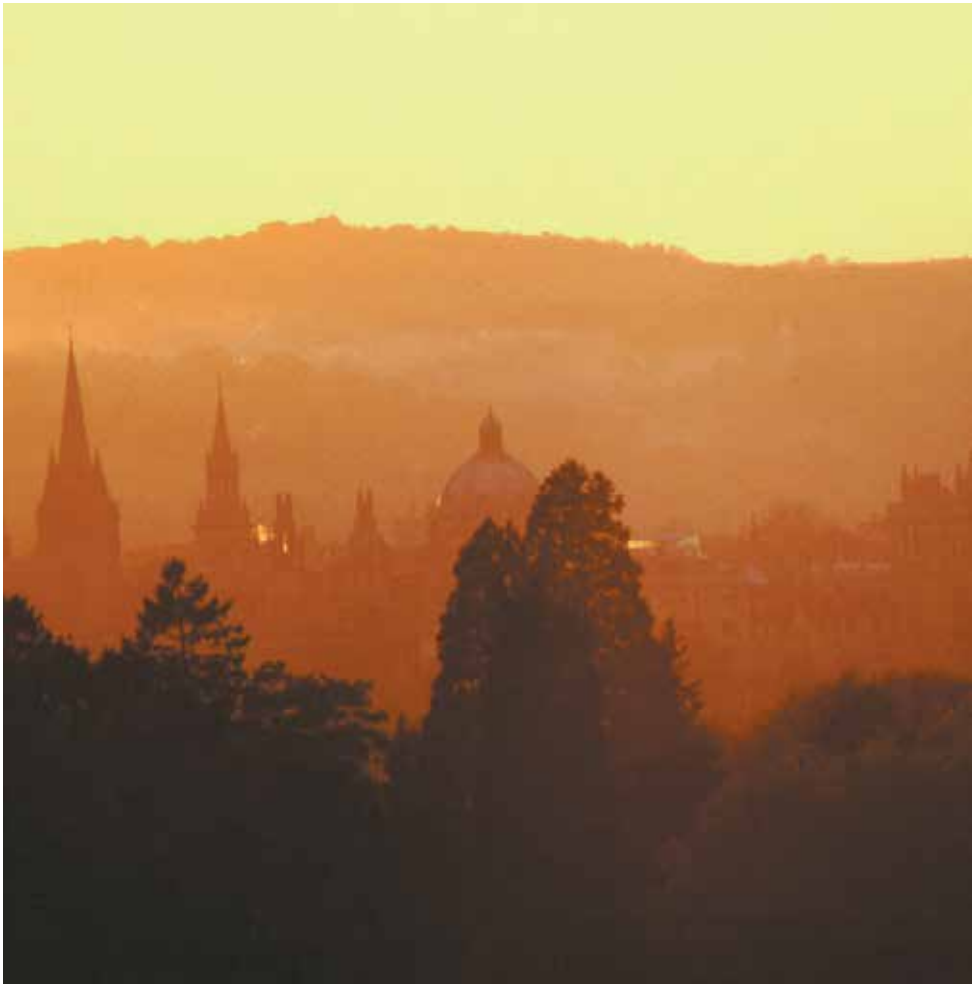


Oxford Pelvic Floor Service
**Obstructive
Defaecation**
Information for patients



What is obstructive defaecation?

Obstructive defaecation is the inability to pass stools (open your bowels). This is normally due to constipation, a tight anal sphincter or weak or poor coordination of the pelvic floor muscles.

Obstructive defaecation may also be caused by an internal prolapse or "intussusception". This is where the rectum slides in on itself, like the parts of a folding telescope, causing a blockage. Obstructive defaecation can be caused by any of the above, but the initial treatment plan is the same.






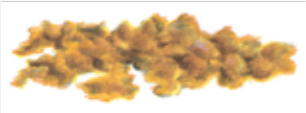

Often, obstructive defaecation is a result of many years of problems, so the treatment exercises will require commitment and persistence to achieve results.

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, but most people open their bowels once a day.

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

Reproduced by kind permission of Dr K W Heaton, Reader in Medicine at the University of Bristol. ©2000 Norgine Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Treatment

Your bowels are a part of your body and it is possible to get back in control of them. This may seem difficult at times, especially when you feel under stress. The following advice will help you to regain control.

Obstructive defaecation is treated with exercise, combined with dietary advice and pelvic floor exercises. We may also recommend a medication which makes your stools softer, to make them easier to pass.

Medication

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

Diet

You should eat a healthy balanced diet and 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 7 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. Relax and lower your shoulders.

2. Relax. 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

Reproduced by kind permission of Ray Addison, Nurse Consultant in Bladder and Bowel Dysfunction. Wendy Ness, Colorectal Nurse Specialist. Produced as a service to the medical profession by Norgine Ltd.

Keep trying

If you have had this problem for many years, it is unlikely that it will be solved overnight, so keep trying. These exercises take time and practice.

Pelvic floor exercises

You will find that completing pelvic floor 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.

Locating the pelvic floor muscles

Choose any comfortable position, with your knees slightly apart. Concentrate on the muscles that you would use to stop yourself from passing urine at the front and to stop yourself passing wind at the back.

When locating these muscles, **try not to:**

- squeeze your buttocks together
- bring your knees together
- cross your legs
- hold your breath
- lift your shoulders/eyebrows/toes upwards.

If you do any of these, you are not tightening your pelvic floor muscles correctly.

To check that you are tightening the correct muscles:

For men: place your fingertips against the skin just behind the scrotum; when you perform this exercise you will feel the muscles tighten and lift up away from your fingers. Your scrotum should lift slightly and the base of your penis should move towards your abdomen.

For women: insert one or two fingers inside your vagina; when you perform this exercise you will feel the muscles tighten around your finger.

The exercise

There are two types of exercise – slow twitch and fast twitch. It is important that you do both slow and fast exercises every time you exercise your pelvic floor muscles.

Slow twitch exercise

1. Tighten and draw up the muscles around your back passage, as if you are trying to stop passing wind. Make sure that you do not tense your buttock muscles when you are doing this.
2. Tighten and draw up the muscles at the front, as if you are trying to stop the flow of urine.
3. Hold for ten seconds. Try not to hold your breath; breathe normally.
4. Then slowly relax and let go.
5. Repeat five times in total.

Fast twitch exercise

1. Tighten up the pelvic floor muscles as before.
2. Hold for one second then relax.
3. Repeat 5 times or until your muscles feel tired.

Build up to doing 5 slow twitch exercises and 5 fast twitch exercises five times a day. The pelvic floor muscles tire easily

and you may notice that it takes a lot of concentration to begin with to do these exercises correctly. When you start, you may not be able to hold for the full ten seconds. Hold for as long as you can and try to increase the time holding as your muscles get stronger; this will show your progress.

Pilates is an exercise that improves flexibility and strengthens muscle tone. It may help to improve your pelvic floor strength when used with the pelvic floor exercises. There are also pelvic floor stimulator machines available to buy from pharmacies and online, please speak to your specialist nurse for more information.

How to contact us

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

Tel: **01865 235 881**

Email: **pelvicfloor.advice@ouh.nhs.uk**

Useful contacts

Bladder and Bowel Foundation

Tel: **0845 345 0165**

Website: **www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/**

Email: **info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Author: Oxford Pelvic Floor Service
March 2016
Review: March 2019
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

