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Introduction to Bowel Health

Diet and daily habits can help you predict when your bowels will move on a regular basis. The consistency and quantity of the stool is usually more important than the frequency. The goal is to have a regular bowel movement that is soft but formed.

Tips on Emptying Regularly

- Eat breakfast. Usually the best time of day for a bowel movement will be a half hour to an hour after eating. These times are best because the body uses the **gastrocolic reflex**, a stimulation of bowel motion that occurs with eating, to help produce a bowel movement. For some people even a simple hot drink in the morning can help the reflex action begin.
- Eat all your meals at a predictable time each day. The bowel functions best when food is introduced at the same regular intervals.
- The amount of food eaten at a given time of day should be about the same size from day to day. The bowel functions best when food is introduced in similar quantities from day to day. It is fine to have a small breakfast and a large lunch, or vice versa, just be consistent.
- Eat two servings of fruit or vegetables and at least one serving of a complex carbohydrates (whole grains such as brown rice, bran, whole wheat bread, or oatmeal) at each meal.
- Drink plenty of water—ideally eight glasses a day. Be sure to increase your water intake if you are increasing fiber into your diet.

Maintain Healthy Habits

- Exercise daily. You may exercise at any time of day, but you may find that bowel function is helped most if the exercise is at a consistent time each day.
- Make sure that you are not rushed and have convenient access to a bathroom at your selected time to empty your bowels.

