

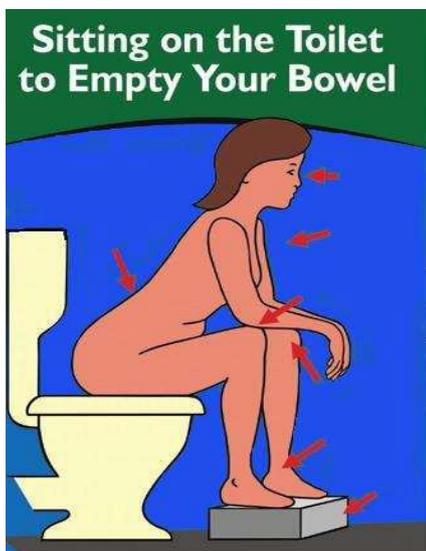


# Good Bowel Habits in Pregnancy

During pregnancy the effects of iron supplements, increased pressure on bowels from the baby or even hormonal changes can mean that we strain and push to empty our bowels.

Learning the best way to empty the bowels without straining is very important to prevent problems such as anal fissures, haemorrhoids (piles) or weakening the pelvic floor muscles.

## Sit correctly on the Toilet



- Keeping your back straight, lean forwards.
- Rest your forearms along your knees.
- Put your legs apart and feet on a small stool.
- Relax - let your tummy sag outwards.
- Don't push or strain.
- Breathe out with a Tsss sound if you are having difficulties, this opens up the back passage.
- Once finished pull up your pelvic floor muscles around the back passage.

## Normal Bowel habits

- Emptying your bowels from three times a day to every second day is normal.
- Stools should be well formed, soft and easy to pass.
- It should take 1-3 minutes to empty your bowels. Come back later if you need to.

## Fibre

- A diet high in soluble fibre such as chick peas, kidney beans, baked beans, vegetables, brown rice and pasta, oats, linseed, and fruit-including prunes, figs, dates and kiwi fruit will make it easier to empty your bowels.
- Insoluble fibre such as bread, nuts, and wheat cereals can lead to large bulky stools that are hard to pass. Drink more if you eat this type of fibre.
- Try to use fibre supplements such as bran and psyllium in small amounts. Use other fibre foods to keep your gut healthy. Increase fibre slowly to avoid gas and cramping.



## Exercise

- Daily exercise. A minimum of forty five minutes walking will stimulate your bowels. A morning walk before eating breakfast will help your bowels to work.

## Water

- Drink two litres of fluids daily, more if you are out in the heat. Fluids should consist of milk, water, one small juice, weak tea or coffee.

**Wake up** ⇒ **Hot drink** ⇒ **Exercise** ⇒ **Food (before 8am)**  
⇒ **GO to the toilet to empty your bowels**

## Meals

- Eat meals at regular times, never skip breakfast.

## For other helpful tips, please see:

- Exercise in pregnancy
- Fibre Foods
- Good Bladder Habits in pregnancy
- Pelvic Floor Muscle exercises in pregnancy

## Further information

[www.bladderbowel.gov.au](http://www.bladderbowel.gov.au)

[www.continence.org.au](http://www.continence.org.au) (Healthy Diet and Bowels leaflet)

[www.continenceandyou.org.au](http://www.continenceandyou.org.au)

- See a Women's Health Physiotherapist at OPH if you have problems with emptying your bowels. Referrals can be made from your GP or the Antenatal Clinic.
- Specialised dietary advice may be required from a dietician if you have irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, gluten intolerance or food sensitivities.

**Produced by:** Osborne Park Hospital [www.oph.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.oph.health.wa.gov.au)

OPH Physiotherapy Department Phone: 9346 8439

OPH Antenatal Clinic Phone: 9346 8010

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.**

CAC Reviewed Dec 2016

© North Metropolitan Health Service Aug 2019