

Bladder & Bowel Care Service

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Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Looking after your bowels

A patient's guide



DID YOU KNOW?

Fluids

Drinking the correct amount of fluid 1.5 – 2 litres of fluid per day can help prevent constipation. The job of the last part of the gut is to absorb fluid back into the body. It will do this even if you are drinking very little. If you are not drinking enough, this makes the waste hard and makes it difficult for you to get rid of waste. Fluid helps the waste to remain slippery and therefore easier to pass.

Fibre

It is important to make sure that your diet has adequate fibre in it. The best advice is to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day for health. To find out how much fibre is in your diet please see the separate leaflet 'Fibre scoring sheet'.

Exercise

Limber up!! Regular exercise, within your limitations, can stimulate the bowel to work regularly.

Routine

Bowels benefit from routine. Allow yourself time and privacy to empty your bowels. This can be difficult if you require help and assistance in the toilet, but discuss this with your nurse, they may have some ideas to help.

When you feel the need to empty your bowel – respond! If you keep ignoring the bowel you can make yourself constipated.

Correct Toilet Sitting Position

It is important to be in a good position to have your bowels open so... Are you sitting comfortably? This means being well supported and feeling safe, not slipping or sliding or having trouble getting on and off the toilet. Feet should be raised and supported (about the height of a shoe box), feet flat on box, leaning forward on to knees.

No Straining

Do not strain to aid bowel emptying this can aggravate haemorrhoids (Piles) and can cause haemorrhoids to bleed, if you see blood you should discuss with your GP. Blowing is a very effective way to help empty bowel you can blow on to the back of your hand or blow bubbles

Medication

Some medicines you take may upset your bowel habit. Do not stop medication, but ask your nurse, doctor or pharmacist if you suspect this for advice