

## Bathroom habits for your pelvic floor

‘no topic should be taboo here’

As you have hopefully figured out by now, your pelvic floor helps control your bathroom habits. Constipation can cause a real issue with your pelvic floor muscles and ligaments from straining to effectively empty your bowels. Straining puts pressure on your pelvic floor ligaments which weakens your pelvic floor support system.

Ideally you want type number 4 bowel motions on the Bristol stool scale below to ensure it is of ideal consistency to get out easily but also be able to be held in effectively too. Type 1-3 suggests some constipation, and types 5-7 are quite runny and you may struggle to hold in effectively if you have altered pelvic floor function.

	Type 1	Separate hard lumps	<b>SEVERE CONSTIPATION</b>
	Type 2	Lumpy and sausage like	<b>MILD CONSTIPATION</b>
	Type 3	A sausage shape with cracks in the surface	<b>NORMAL</b>
	Type 4	Like a smooth, soft sausage or snake	<b>NORMAL</b>
	Type 5	Soft blobs with clear-cut edges	<b>LACKING FIBRE</b>
	Type 6	Mushy consistency with ragged edges	<b>MILD DIARRHEA</b>
	Type 7	Liquid consistency with no solid pieces	<b>SEVERE DIARRHEA</b>

Figure 1 Bristol Stool chart, image credit: [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

So some tips to help achieve optimal bowel habits...

- Nutrition and hydration; drink around 2L water a day to maintain hydration, more if you are breastfeeding or exercising more intensely, eat a diet rich in fibre, including vegetables, fruits, nuts/seeds, wholegrain cereals etc.
- Place your feet up on a stool when passing a bowel motion on the toilet, (if you don't have a stool either get one – your baby will eventually need it for toilet training anyway, or stack up some books or similar to rest your feet on. Getting your knees slightly higher than your hips helps to get your rectum straighter and therefore less straining is required allowing stools to pass easier. Also lean forward slightly.
- To avoid straining, bulge your tummy out like a balloon which helps relax your pelvic floor, you don't want this as it generates increased pressure in the pelvis which doesn't help and a secret tip I came across is to 'mooooo' as you pass your motion, it's hard to 'moo' and strain at the same time!
- Listen to your bodies urge to go to the toilet for wee's and poo's. Weeing too frequently for 'just incase situations' doesn't allow for your bladder to stretch and be able to accommodate a larger volume.
- And of course, do your pelvic floor exercises daily ensuring your relax but not bear down between each contraction.



*Please note: not all bladder or bowel control problems are a result of pelvic floor problems, please see your healthcare professional if you have on-going concerns.*