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How Often Should You Poop? | By Dr. Mercola | November 18th, 2017

Yes, there really are standards for how often a person should be visiting the porcelain throne. Of course, nearly everyone is thrown off their game from time to time, but generally speaking, there's a few telling criteria regarding this most private of events.

How often it's done is joined by several other aspects of what constitutes a healthy "evacuation" schedule. Points to ponder include not just what's normal and abnormal, but how much is too much or too little? What might affect how often you go? Perhaps most important of all might be the question of what you can do to be more regular.

In fact, how often you empty your innards can be a good indication of how healthy you are and whether or not your body really is running like the well-oiled machine it's intended to be. Many more people are concerned about these questions than one might think, but uneasiness and even fear about what certain signs and symptoms might mean often go unaddressed due to embarrassment, even with their doctors and close family members.

The process of elimination is your body's way of ridding itself of undigested food and waste it doesn't need, which is why "regularity" is a by-word for health. Irregularity can affect your emotional state, how well your brain processes information, cause skin breakouts and bloating, and prevent your body from absorbing nutrients.

How Often Should You Make a Deposit Into the Porcelain Bank?

Of course, everyone is different. The question of what's normal and healthy for a 21-year-old student compared to a 41-year-old commercial fisherman or a 71-year-old knitting fanatic is one that involves diet, lifestyle and a few other factors. However, in one study, researchers found that 98 percent of their 268 participants had a bowel movement frequency ranging from three times weekly to three times daily. Both ends of the spectrum were considered normal. According to Perfect Origins, depending on your height, age and diet, you could be carrying around anywhere from 5 to 20 pounds of fecal matter in your intestines at any given time. Failure to get rid of waste at "regular" intervals can cause or exacerbate: Further, instances of urgency, straining and incomplete evacuation can also be normal; age differences didn't seem to be a factor. That said, Medical News Today confronts some of the most common and thought-provoking aspects of proper elimination, including:

- Doctors often see frequency and consistency as indicators of a person's health.
- Generally speaking, most people retain the same bathroom habits, visiting the facilities at about the same frequency and at about the same time of day.
- Temporary changes in the frequency of bowel movements are normal and can coincide with eating unfamiliar food, undergoing stress and many other factors.
- Significant deviations from the "norm" may be an indication of a problem in your stomach or colon.

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|-----------------|-------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| - Upset stomach | - Heartburn | - Excess gas | - Constipation |
| - Diarrhea | - Insomnia | - Mood swings | - Irritable bowel syndrome |
| - Skin problem | - Allergies | | |

How the 'Elimination Process' Works — or Doesn't

Pooping is the last order of business in digestion. When you swallow your food, the muscles of your esophagus begin contracting and relaxing in a process known as peristalsis, moving the food to your stomach. There, your food gets broken up, and the secretion of gastric juices keeps things moving. The next steps are through the small intestines, liver and large

intestines. Kids Health explains:

“After most of the nutrients are removed from the food mixture there is waste left over — stuff your body can't use. This stuff needs to be passed out of the body. Can you guess where it ends up? Well, here's a hint: It goes out with a flush. Before it goes, it passes through the part of the large intestine called the colon, which is where the body gets its last chance to absorb the water and some minerals into the blood. As the water leaves the waste product, what's left gets harder and harder as it keeps moving along, until it becomes a solid.”

A number of factors can halt the process, leading to constipation, or speed it up and make it painful and watery, aka diarrhea. Your diet and lifestyle choices have a huge impact on the way your body rids itself of unnecessary matter. These include:

- The amount of fiber you eat, as a healthy amount helps your schedule stay regular
- Exercise or lack thereof, as activity helps your colon work better
- Medications such as antacids, opiates and antidepressants, as they can cause constipation
- Poor nutrition, as an absence of vital vitamins and minerals can adversely affect regularity
- Hormones, including progesterone and estrogen, which can affect elimination frequency
- Adherence to routine, as travelling and frequent changes can influence your “ease” in eliminating
- The amounts of liquids you drink, as deficient water intake can make it more difficult to eliminate
- Frequent use of laxatives, as it's linked to heart disease, stroke and, ironically, constipation
- Taking iron supplements, as they may promote constipation
- Medical conditions like Crohn's disease, colitis or even the flu, which can change how often you poop

How You Eat Is Directly Related to How You Poop

What you eat or don't eat has a big impact on how your digestive system works. Eating plenty of fiber-rich vegetables is an important way to help ensure regularity, and at the same time, grains contain antinutrients as well as sticky proteins like gluten that can cause constipation and, worse, may contain lectins that can lead to worse problems, such as leaky gut. Processed foods are harmful to even the healthiest colon.

How Well You Poop May Be Related to Your Position When You Poop

You may never have given it a thought, but before toilets came along, and definitely in earlier eras and certain geographical areas of the world today, people used a completely different set of muscles when they prepared to poop. Unfortunately, in today's modern world, one reason elderly people enter nursing homes is because their leg muscles are too weak for them to stand after using the toilet.

Today, more people than ever are sitting to empty their bowels as opposed to getting into a squatting position. However, sitting can inhibit how completely you're able to get rid of waste. Experts say sitting actually impedes your body's ability to eliminate everything inside your colon that needs to come out. In most places in the world, squatting so that your knees are closer to your chest as opposed to perpendicular (at a 90-degree angle) is still the natural arrangement of the body to optimize elimination.

Why It's Easier at Home

You may have noticed it yourself — that your toilet time doesn't seem quite as satisfactory when you're away from home, but the minute you walk into your own humble abode, the urge to let it all out hits you — finally. It also happens frequently upon arriving home after a trip. Why is that? Nick Haslam, psychology professor at the University of Melbourne and author of “Psychology in the Bathroom,” told The Atlantic it even occurs when you've been suffering from constipation. It's just such a relief to finally be in your own surroundings. Two more factors might play into this phenomenon: Eating unfamiliar foods away from home sometimes has an unsettling effect on your colon, and those foods may also have the added consequence of passing along unfamiliar bacteria, which may help throw your microbiome into clamp mode until you cross your own threshold.