

Bowel

It is normal for bowels to move as little as once every 3 days up to as often as 3 times every day.

How do I keep my bowel healthy?

- Empty your bowel when you feel the need don't always put it off.
- Eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- Although fibre can help, most people's bowels work more efficiently, for some it can make matters worse, especially if fluid intake is poor.
- Keep active, regular daily exercise helps prevent constipation.
- Ensure good clear fluid intake of 1.5 – 2 litres per day water / fresh juices.
- Sit in a good position on the toilet to empty - don't hover.
- Take your time at the toilet, do not rush.

How do I know if I have a bowel problem?

- If you have diarrhoea all the time.
- If you are constipated or have difficulty passing a stool.
- If you have accidents or can't make it to the toilet in time.

Around 1 in 4 people experience bowel or bladder weakness. Don't suffer in silence. Help and treatment is available.

Please speak to your GP or Advanced Nurse Practitioner with any new symptoms, who will consider a referral to the community Bladder and Bowel Health Team for further treatment and support.

Email: dg.continence-service@nhs.scot

Telephone: **01387 244405** Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm
(There is an answering machine outwith these times).

Produced by

NHS Dumfries & Galloway Bladder and Bowel Health Team

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**Embarrassed by bladder
or bowel problems?**

Keeping your bladder and bowel healthy

Healthy bladder and bowel habits can help you avoid symptoms such as frequent trips to the toilet, urgency, constipation and incontinence. Incontinence can have a major impact on your quality of life. If you or someone you know is affected by incontinence, it is important to remember that:

- You are **not alone** – it is estimated that 6 million people in the UK are affected by incontinence.
- It affects both men and women, regardless of your age or background, it is not just an old age problem.
- It can be treated, managed and in many cases cured, and
- There are many avenues of help available.

If you have any bleeding when emptying your bladder or bowel, or have a change in habits, please contact your GP.

If you are newly experiencing bladder or bowel incontinence, don't accept pads in supermarkets or chemists as the solution – please contact your GP.

Bladder

How do I know if I have a problem with my bladder?

- Sudden urge to go to the toilet and when you pass urine it is only a small amount.
- Unable to get to the toilet in time.
- Need to empty bladder more than 5-7 times per day.
- Getting up more than once during sleep.
- Being wet when you cough, laugh, sneeze or when doing any exercise.
- Dribbling urine all of the time, even without noticing it. The bladder may feel full all the time, and so may strain to pass urine, this can be caused by a problem in emptying the bladder.
- Frequent bladder infections.



What do I do to keep my bladder healthy?

- Drink between 1500ml to 2000ml of fluid per day. Fluid volumes should be approx 200-300mls, evenly spaced throughout the day, with the last drink up to two hours before bedtime.
- On hot days or if you have exercised a lot you may need to drink more.
- You should be emptying your bladder 5-7 times per day.
- Avoid going to the toilet 'just in case' as this may cause your bladder to shrink.
- Try to avoid or reduce caffeine, alcohol, fizzy drinks and very acidic foods.
- Urine should be a pale straw colour, if it is a stronger colour you may not be drinking enough.
- If you restrict your fluids you will have strong urine which can irritate your bladder and make you feel really desperate to go to the toilet and make you want to go more often than normal.
- There are pelvic floor exercises which may help to stop or reduce leaking. These can be taught/discussed with your local Continence Nurse Advisor or Physiotherapist.