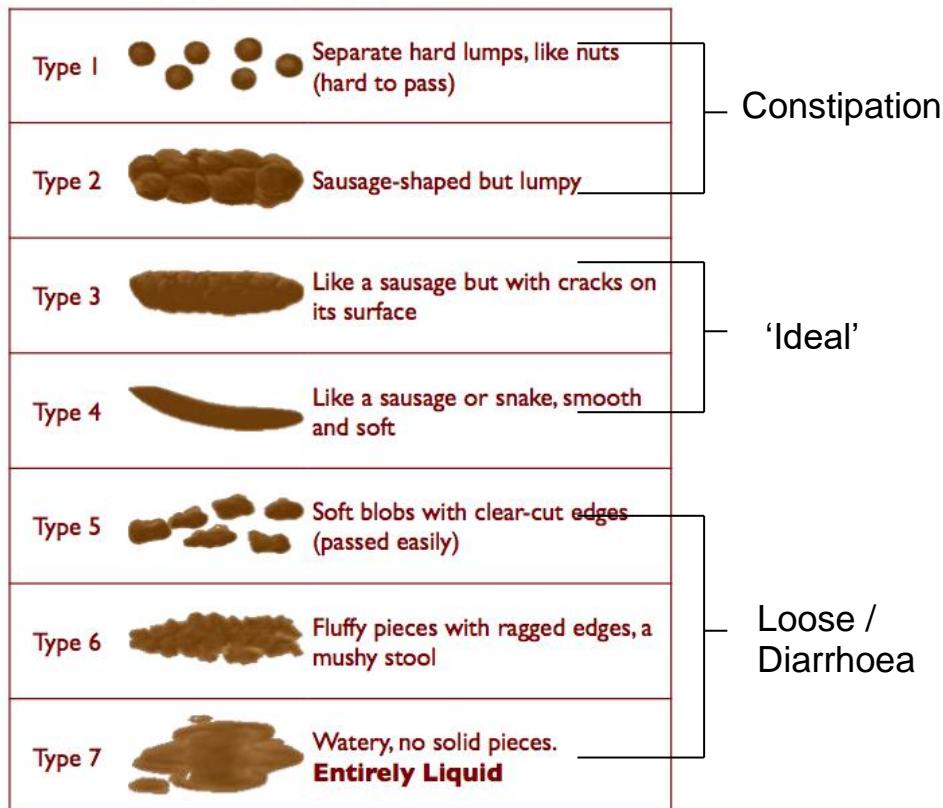




What can your stools tell you???

Bristol Stool Chart



What can your stools tell you???

Faeces can tell you a lot about health issues, changes in colour, texture, frequency and consistency can alert to various conditions. Faeces are made up of 75% water and the rest is undigested fibre, dietary fats and intestinal bacteria.

NORMAL Stools

- Stools should be firm, moist and easy to pass, but regularity differs from person to person. Stools contain bile pigments (stercobilin) which gives them their characteristic brown colour.

Changes in colour

- **Red-** Blood smeared on toilet paper can be caused by haemorrhoids or anal fissures. If bright red blood is found in faeces, it can indicate internal bleeding from a stomach ulcer or bowel cancer.
- **Black (melena)-** Can be a result of bleeding higher up in the gastrointestinal tract such as oesophagus or stomach. It could also be from blood from an ulcer. But the most common cause is from taking iron supplements.
- **Maroon-** This is usually as a result of blood, which could be from the bowel, Diverticulosis, angiodysplasia (leaky blood vessels in the intestinal lining) or bowel cancer.
- **Cream or pale coloured-** This could be due to insufficient bile salts. It could also be a result of a range of digestive disorders affecting the pancreas, gall bladder or liver. Stools may also be pale due to presence of undigested fat in the stool.
- **Yellow-** this may be caused by a parasite Giardia or Gilbert's Syndrome, when there excess bilirubin in the

Changes in Texture

- **Watery-** diarrhoea can be a result of a number of conditions. Short term- food poisoning, gastroenteritis and anxiety. Chronic diarrhoea can be caused by coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease, irritable bowel syndrome, diverticulosis or bowel cancer. It can also be caused by lactose intolerance, medications and diet ie. high fibre diets, coffee and soft drinks.
- **Hard and dry-** and often difficult to pass is referred to as constipation and can be a result of a low fibre diet, and some medications. Constipation can cause haemorrhoids due to increased straining.
- **Greasy-** constant greasy stools may be indicative of poor fat digestion. A high fat meal can also cause fatty, smelly stools which tend to float.
- **Stringy-** stools which appear thin and stringy may be caused by a parasitic infection such as worms.
- **Stool that sinks quickly-** Is an indication of inadequate water or fibre intake such as fruit, vegetables and whole grains.

Normal Stools

- **First stool**- is usually greenish-black, sticky made up of meconium. When feeding starts the faeces lighten in colour.
- **Breast fed**- ranges in colour from yellow to dark green
- **Formula fed**- ranges in colour from cream to yellow to dark green
- **Colour changes in stools of babies** can take the colour of recently eaten foods diseases such as food poisoning, diarrhoea, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, irritable bowel syndrome as well
- **Soft smelly stools**- that are difficult to flush or that float may indicate increased fats in the stool.
- **Mucus**- whitish mucus in stools indicates inflammation in the intestines.

Babies