

# Tufts Medical Center

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## The Scoop on Poop

### WHAT IS POOP?

- What is left in your digestive system after nutrients are absorbed from the foods you eat
- 75 percent water  
25 percent bacteria, food waste, undigested food
- Diet, medications, supplements, GI disease/infection affects the balance of stool.
- **Diarrhea** happens when stool passes through large intestine too fast  
**Constipation** is when stool passes through large intestine too slowly
- Digestion process produces Sulphur-containing compounds. Feces can smell more if diet is rich in meat or spicy food.

### FREQUENCY

- Normal bowel movements are between 3 times per day to 3 times per week
- The time from eating a meal to eliminating it is 1–3 days.

### COLOR

*(Occasional changes are normal and usually linked to what you ate)*

**Brown:** Healthy

**Red/Maroon:** Foods with red dye or coloring including breakfast cereals, beets, tomato sauce. Also, certain conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease; diverticulosis, hemorrhoids; polyps; colorectal cancer

**Orange:** Excess amount of beta-carotene from supplements or produce such as carrots, sweet potato and squash

**Grey/Yellowish:** Liver or gallbladder problems

*(see physician if continues)*

**Green:** Ingesting large quantities of leafy greens or items with food coloring such as popsicles or candy. Could also be a sign of infection.

**Black:** Iron supplements, black liquorice, blueberries. Possible intestinal bleeding in higher part of intestinal tract *(see physician if continues)*

### SEE A DOCTOR IF...

**Feces appear like this for more than 1–2 weeks:**

- Bloody
- Black in color
- Pencil thin shape
- Diarrhea with weight loss or fever
- Accompanied by severe abdominal pain

### KEEP YOUR DIGESTION ON TRACK:

- 30 grams of fiber/day
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water per day
- Eat meals at regular times—don't skip breakfast
- Be active every day

### REFERENCES:

*Canadian Society of intestinal Research*

*Medline Plus*

*National Institute of Diabetes and Kidney Diseases*

*Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute*