

Your bowel diary

To help understand how to treat or better manage your bowel control, a health professional may ask you to keep a bowel diary.

A bowel diary is a record you keep of the times and types of bowel motions (poo or stool) you passed or leaked. When you record this information over a few days, you may start seeing patterns.

These patterns may help work out what is causing the problem or how to better manage it. For example, you may only be having problems during certain parts of the day or night, or after certain food or drinks.

Your doctor, nurse continence specialist or pelvic health physiotherapist will use this information as part of your continence assessment.

How do I fill in a diary?

- ⇒ Record information for a full week (7 days in a row)
- ⇒ Follow the example given at the top of the diary to help you fill it out correctly
- ⇒ Use the Bristol Stool Chart (Figure 1.) to help describe your bowel motions

Bristol Stool Chart


Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear cut edges (passed easily)
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. ENTIRELY LIQUID

Figure 1 – Bristol Stool Chart

Developed by K.W. Heaton & S.J. Lewis at the University of Bristol and first published in the Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology in 1997. © Norgine Ltd

What is a continence assessment?

In a continence assessment, your health professional will ask you a few questions, do a physical check and may ask for more tests to be done.

Based on the results of your assessment, they will then prepare a plan for you to help treat or better manage your bowel issue. The plan can include:

- ⇒ changes to your diet or fluid intake
- ⇒ pelvic floor muscle exercises
- ⇒ changes to your medications.

Other fact sheets

- ⇒ [Healthy diet and bowels](#)
- ⇒ [Pelvic floor muscle exercises for men](#)
- ⇒ [Pelvic floor muscle exercises for women](#)
- ⇒ [Continence products](#)
- ⇒ [Poor bowel control](#)
- ⇒ [Looking after your bowel](#)

More information and advice

The Continence Foundation of Australia is the national peak body for continence prevention, management, education, awareness, information and advocacy Website continence.org.au

The National Public Toilet Map shows the location of public and private toilet facilities across Australia Website toiletmap.gov.au

Call the National Continence Helpline on 1800 33 00 66 (free call)

Speak with a nurse continence specialist for free and confidential advice on resources, details for local continence services, products and financial assistance.

For more information, you can also visit:

- continence.org.au
- toiletmap.gov.au
- health.gov.au/bladder-bowel

This fact sheet is intended as a general overview only and is not a substitute for professional assessment and care.

