

Keeping a Healthy Bowel

Information and advice for patients

Continence Service

What is a normal Bowel?

A healthy stool is soft formed and brownish in colour. It should be pain free to pass and require no or minimal straining.

The general range for bowel movements is from three times a day to three times a week.

What are the risks of not keeping a healthy bowel?

- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Haemorrhoids
- Diverticular Disease
- Colon Cancer
- Faecal Incontinence

How to keep a healthy bowel

1. Eat a healthy diet including foods high in fibre e.g., fruit, vegetables and whole grains
2. Aim to have 18g fibre daily
3. Drink 1.5-2litres daily
4. Aim to keep active, this will help move food through the digestive tract (gut)
5. Allow enough time on the toilet, no rushing or straining
6. Adapt the correct position for opening your bowels

Altered Bowel patterns

What is Constipation?

You are likely to be constipated if;

- You have not had your bowels open at the least three times a week
- The faeces is dry, hard or lumpy
- You are straining or in pain when opening your bowels

What is diarrhoea?

You are likely to have diarrhoea if;

- You have loose, watery stool for three or more times a day Diarrhoea may be:
Active which lasts 1-2 days and goes away on its own or
Persistent which lasts longer than 2 weeks and less than 4 weeks or
Chronic lasts longer than 4 weeks

Keeping a Healthy Bowel

Information and advice for patients

Continence Service

- **Pain** - This occurs during treatment in about 1% of treatments. Existing symptoms can get worse after treatment in less than 3% of patients. You should tell your practitioner about this but it is usually a good sign.
- **Dizziness and faintness** - This is rare but can happen particularly on the first treatment.
- **Allergies and infections** - These are very rare as only sterile, single-use disposable needles are used in accordance with national guidelines.

If there are any particular risks that apply to you these will be discussed with you prior to treatment starting.

Acupuncture will not be given if:

- You have a metal allergy.
- You have a needle phobia.
- There is infection where the needle is to be inserted.
- You have haemophilia.

You must inform the practitioner if you:

- Have a bleeding disorder, bruise very easily or are taking any anti-coagulants or blood-thinning medication such as Warfarin, Heparin or Clopidogrel.
- Have ever had a fainting fit or "funny turn".
- Have a pacemaker or other electrical implant.
- Have damaged heart valves or have any other particular risk of infection.
- Have diabetes.
- Are pregnant or trying to conceive.
- Have hepatitis, HIV or any other blood disorder.
- Have epilepsy.

Keeping a Healthy Bowel

Information and advice for patients

Continence Service

I want to give acupuncture a try – what happens next?

If you want to try acupuncture please call us within four weeks of receiving this leaflet. This is so we can add your name to a waiting list. You will be offered an appointment with one of the team to discuss your pain and treatment.

If you want to go ahead with acupuncture or if you have any questions about it, please contact the pain service:

Telephone: 0121 507 4866 or 5603 or 4344 (please leave a message if we are busy)

Email: swbh.pain-plan@nhs.net

If we do not hear from you within four weeks, we will assume that you have decided that acupuncture is not the right approach for you, or it is not the right time.

Other Information

All practitioners, both physiotherapists and nurses, have undergone recognised post-graduate training on the use of acupuncture for the management of pain.

What happens now?

Once we have discussed your pain and are happy that you understand exactly what acupuncture is you will be asked to sign a consent form and treatment will begin. On average six sessions are given either once or twice weekly. If at any time you change your mind please inform your practitioner to discuss alternative treatments or to book a review appointment for you, whichever is the most appropriate.

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email swbh.library@nhs.net.



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals
© Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

ML6675

Issue Date: May 2023

Review Date: May 2026