

spina bifida

Passport to success

What other factors can cause a change in bowel habits?

Lifestyle factors and life events such as:

- holidays
- disruption in usual daily routines
- a change in water, such as when travelling
- illness, especially involving fever
- anxiety especially at work or school
- hospital procedures
- changes to family structure such as a new birth, separation, death of a relative or friend
- starting a new school or job.

A good diet: The key to good health and happy bowels

What diet will help achieve the right stool consistency for good bowel management?

While a healthy diet for people of all ages is a general health principle, diet can be used effectively by some people to alter stool consistency and support bowel control.

It is important to know which foods cause loose stools (diarrhoea) and which foods will promote a good firm stool.

Foods which are frequently associated with causing loose stools

- Citrus fruit, fruit juice, passionfruit, pineapple
- Corn (fresh or tinned)
- Baked beans
- Chocolate/malt/chocolate powders used to flavour milk
- Nuts/dried fruit.

If I need to soften stool consistency, what should I eat?

Eat more of:

- high fibre breads and natural whole grain cereals: eg. bran, oatmeal, rice
- fresh raw vegetables, raw fruit, sugar free juices
- fatty cuts — mince, sausage, mullet, tuna and mackerel
- matured or processed cheese, yoghurt
- whole milk
- herbs, spices, nuts, pizza, muesli bars, chocolate.

Eat less of:

- highly refined (white) breads, biscuits
- tinned fruits, juice with high sugar content
- lean cuts such as veal, chicken and whiting
- soft drinks, cordials, skim milk
- plain sugar, syrups, jellies, sweets.

If I need to harden stool consistency, what should I eat?

Eat more of:

- white bread
- cooked vegetables with low fibre such as potatoes, pumpkins, carrots
- tinned fruit in small amount
- lean meats — veal, chicken, whiting
- cottage cheese, boiled or poached eggs
- skim or low fat milk
- honey, jelly.

Eat less of:

- high fibre breads and natural whole grain cereals: eg. bran, oatmeal, muesli
- fresh fruits and vegetables, fruit juice
- fatty cuts — mince, sausage, mullet, tuna and mackerel
- whole milk, cheese, fried eggs
- cream
- herbs, spices, pizza
- minimise oil, butter and margarine.

As you can see, it is not a matter of limiting your food intake to alter stool consistency. It is a matter of selecting the right foods to suit your purpose. There is plenty of variety to choose from. You won't go hungry!