



## Information sheet: Bowel control

Most adults take this for granted and give it little thought except for the few minutes each day that it takes to empty. Bowels do not have good press and bowel pain and related conditions can cause misery, isolation and expense.

Our bowel function is a complex and delicate co-ordination of nerves and muscles. There is a wide range of "normal", but as long as stools are passed without needing to rush, minimal effort, no straining and no laxatives, then this can be considered normal.

Bowel function is based on personal past experience, childhood and of course other medical factors such as medications, surgery, childbirth.

### Loss of control

This problem is more common than people think because it is often not reported to any body. It can be devastating and result in constant fear that it may happen again. Anxiety is about not how often or how much but never being certain that you are safe.

### Difficulty emptying

This can be a problem relating to muscles out of balance and overactive and/ or pelvic organ prolapse.

Symptoms can be:

- a desire to empty but inability to pass anything
- a feeling of things falling down during voiding
- passing small incomplete frequent stools
- feeling of not emptying properly
- pain associated with emptying (before, during or after)

### Constipation

There are many causes once again and this can be complex physiological or simple inappropriate diet, misused muscles and wear and tear over time.

I can offer treatment techniques for all of the above problems and practical measures to improve your control and quality of life:

- teaching on normal bowel function
- how to relieve pain
- to retrain muscles to overcome poor toilet habits
- changing the way your body reacts
- isolating specific muscle groups and sphincters

Physiotherapy treatment involves assessment (you may be asked to complete a bowel diary) and depending on your symptoms:

- bowel retraining
- sphincter/pelvic floor muscle rehabilitation (this takes motivation and patience, and can take weeks to notice improvement)
- positions/techniques for voiding
- Identifying triggers

You may need several visits to check that you are working the correct muscles and to help maintain motivation.

**Contact details:** Linley Edmeades, 13 Lorne Street, Hamilton.

Telephone: 07 829 7939

Email: [info@pelvichealthphysio.co.nz](mailto:info@pelvichealthphysio.co.nz)

Web: [www.pelvichealthphysio.co.nz](http://www.pelvichealthphysio.co.nz)