

# Nutrition for bowel after a spinal cord injury

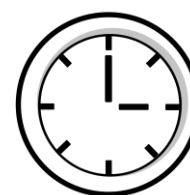
## Learn about your bowel function

Understand how your bowel now works.  
Learn how cares and medications affect it



## Time your meal to help with cares

A meal and/or warm drink 20-30 minutes before starting your cares may help your bowel to move



## Have a regular meal pattern

Have breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.  
Eat at similar times each day and choose similar amounts and types of food



## Be physically active

When you move it encourages your gut to move also. Being up also helps gravity to move the bowels



## Allow time to trial changes

Make dietary changes one at a time and allow 1 week to see what effect they will have your bowel routine



## Keep a diary if having problems

Record what you eat and drink, your bowels, medications and cares. This can help you identify problems



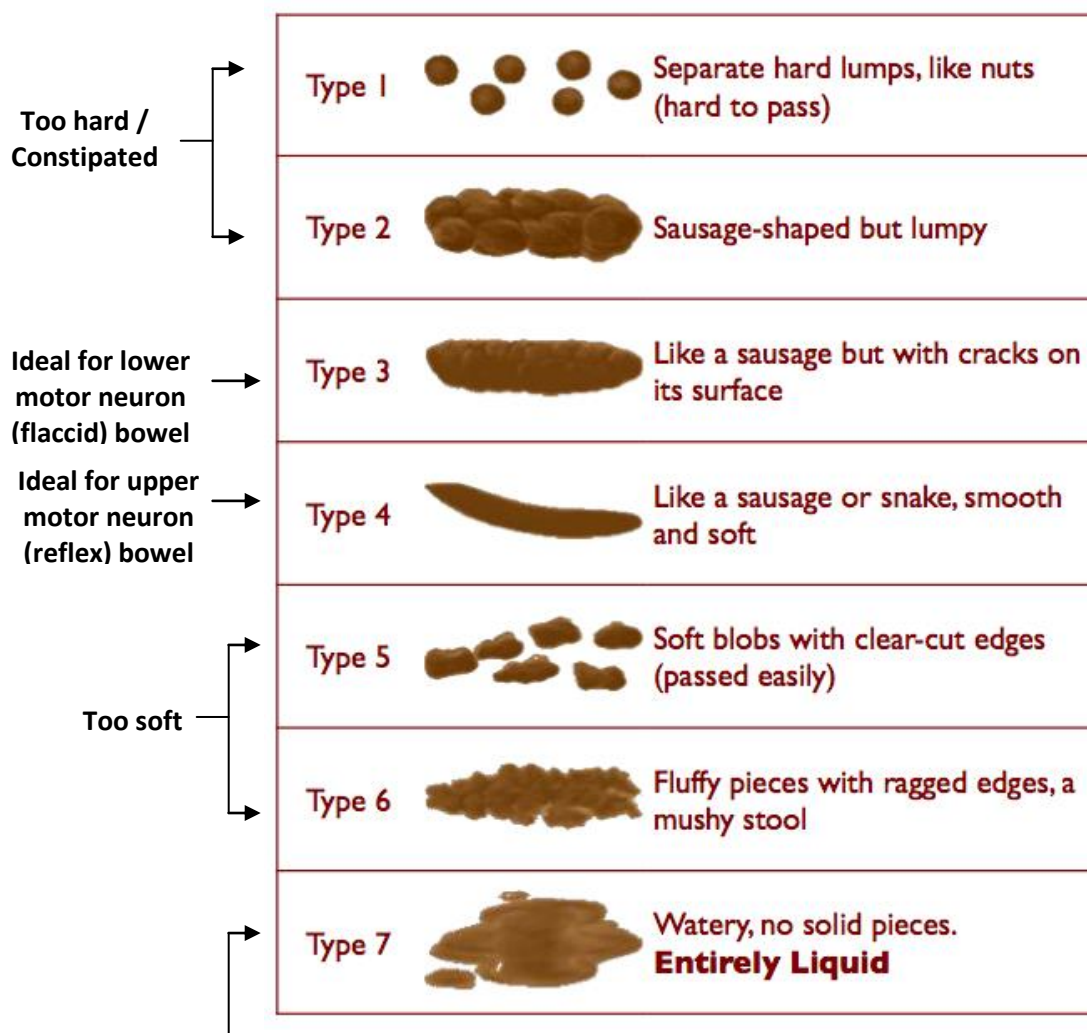
File number: 2.0	Last updated: 21/08/18	Review date: 21/08/21	Author: Spinal Unit Dietitian
Approved by: CM Health Nutrition & Dietetic Quality Group		Document owner: Professional Leader Nutrition & Dietetics CM Health	
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# Stool form

Food and fluid can help you achieve the right stool form. This will help you to avoid bowel accidents and reduce the risk of other bowel problems. The Bristol Stool Chart (below) helps to describe stool form.

The type of stool that is best depends on what type of bowel you have:

- If you have an **upper motor neuron** bowel (reflex bowel), aim for type 4 stool
- If you have a **lower motor neuron** bowel (flaccid or areflexic bowel), aim for type 3 stool
- Those with an incomplete spinal cord injury, or an injury at level T10-T12 may have **mixed bowel** function. If your anal muscles are more flaccid and you require manual evacuation, aim for type 3 stool. Otherwise, aim for type 4 stool



**A number of things may cause Type 7 stool:**

- Certain medications
- Overflow diarrhoea from severe constipation
- Illness affecting your bowel (eg. food poisoning, "tummy bug").

# If your stool is too hard

## Eat breakfast

Breakfast is a very high fibre meal. If timed correctly, it may also help the bowel to move during morning cares



## Increase your fibre intake slowly

Making sudden changes may lead to bowel accidents



## Have enough fluid

Not having enough to drink can cause hard stool. A high fibre diet will not work if your fluid intake is poor



## Find the right balance

Not everyone with a spinal cord injury needs the same amount of fibre. Changes to your medications and physical activity can also affect how much you need



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# How to increase your fibre intake

*Fibre comes from plant foods. It is not absorbed into your body but is important for bowel health. Fibre supports a regular bowel habit and appropriate stool form.*

## 1. Start by having enough fruit and vegetables



**1 serving = 1 handful**

**Every day have:**

- 2 – 4 servings of fresh fruit
- At least 3 servings of non-starchy vegetables

## 2. Choose wholegrain breads and cereals



## 3. Include beans and lentils in your diet





## High fibre breakfast ideas



bran cereals



muesli



Wheat biscuits



porridge (not instant)



beans on grainy toast



peanut butter on grainy toast

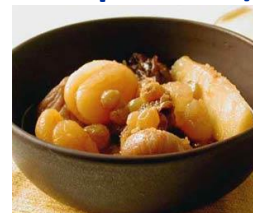


fruit and grain toast

### Include a handful of fruit (eat with skin where possible)



fresh fruit



fruit compote



tinned fruit



stewed fruit



frozen berries

## High fibre lunch ideas

- Use grainy bread in sandwiches and filled rolls



- Include salad in your sandwich or on the side



- Try a baked jacket potato with vegetables or baked beans



- Enjoy homemade vegetable soup



- Add frozen vegetables to noodles



# High fibre snack ideas

- Fresh fruit



- ¼ cup raw nuts or seeds\*



- ¼ cup dried fruit\*



- Grainy cracker with hummus\*



- Vegetable sticks



- Yoghurt topped with muesli



- Bran muffin\*



- Muesli bar\* (check nutrition information using this guide)



## Nutrition information

	Per serving
Energy	Less than 600kJ
Protein	-
Fat	-
- saturated	Less than 2g
Carbohydrate	-
- sugars	Less than 10g
Sodium	Less than 150mg
Fibre	More than 1.5g

\* These foods can be high in calories. If you are trying to lose weight, limit the amount you eat. Check the nutrition panel on muesli bar packets.



# High fibre dinner ideas

- Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables



- Leave the skin on vegetables



- Garnish salads with seeds, nuts or toasted chick peas



- Choose wholemeal pasta or brown rice



- If having dessert, make it fruity





# If your stool is too soft

## Check your medications

If you are still taking oral laxatives, these should be reviewed before changing your diet



## We are all different

Be aware that different foods effect people differently. What is a problem food for someone else might not be a problem for you



## Trial and error

Only remove 1 food from your diet at a time. Otherwise, you may end up avoiding foods that are not causing any problem



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# Dietary changes you can try

## 1. Start by limiting stimulant food and drinks



**Dried fruit**



**prunes**



**kiwifruit**



**juice**



**coffee**



**energy drinks**



**alcohol**



**fizzy drinks**



**chocolate**



**sugarfree gum**



**artificial sweetener**



**very spicy food**

## 2. Balance your intake of high fibre foods



Fruit: Limit to 2 servings per day  
Vegetables: Limit to 3 servings per day  
*1 serving = 1 cupped handful*



Choose mostly white bread, rice and pasta.  
Peel potatoes and kumara. Avoid bran based breakfast cereals

*A supplement high in soluble fibre may also be recommended by your doctor or nurse. This may help your stool become more formed.*

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