



Do You Need a Colon Cleanse?

Determining Health from Bowel Function

In the movie, *The Last Emperor*, the Chinese doctors regulated the young Emperor's diet by examining his stool. In modern society, few people pay attention to this, but you can learn to maintain better health by monitoring your elimination.

For starters, most healthy infants (and wild animals) have one bowel movement for each meal they eat. Since most North Americans eat three meals per day, this would translate into three eliminations per day. So, if you have one bowel movement per day (or less) and you eat three meals per day, you're constipated and could probably benefit from a colon cleanse.

Next, your stool should not be difficult to eliminate. You should be able to feel the urge to go, sit down and have the elimination come out in a smooth move. If you have to strain to eliminate, you're lacking water and fiber.

The shape of the stool is also important. Your colon is a long narrow tube, and the stool should come out in long, narrow pieces. Usually, healthy stools will be banana- or s-shaped, or shaped like a thick piece of rope. If the stool comes out in hard, dry balls, you are likely dehydrated and constipated.

The stool should be about the combined thickness of your pointer and middle fingers. If it is larger than this, then you are getting ballooning in the colon, a sign that the colon is lacking muscle tone, and a good colon cleanse is probably in order.

The consistency of the stool tells a lot about what is happening in the digestive tract. The stool should have form, but the form should be loose and probably break up a little on flushing. It should not be thick and fudgy (like peanut butter). If it is, you may not have enough fiber in your diet, or you may have an imbalance in the friendly microbes in the colon.

If the stool doesn't have form and is watery, then you've got diarrhea. Diarrhea is a sign of acute or chronic intestinal inflammation, which is due to the presence of toxins in the digestive tract (which may be the result of infection or parasites), and can be remedied by fiber or activated charcoal. The fiber absorbs the toxins, but there may also be a need for anti-inflammatory agents, anti-microbial agents or a parasite cleanse. Chronic diarrhea is often a sign of inflammatory bowel disorders and should be checked out by a doctor.

The stool can also tell you how well your digestive tract is working. If there are undigested food particles in the stool, then you need to work on digestion. Are you chewing your food thoroughly? Do you have sufficient hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes to break food down properly? Digestive enzymes may help.

Stools should not float, either. If stools have a greasy sheen and bob around in the toilet like a cork (which makes them very

difficult to flush) then you aren't digesting fats properly. Your gall bladder may not be functioning properly to emulsify fats (make them water soluble) for absorption or you may be deficient in lipase enzymes.

This brings us to the subject of stool color. Bile is a major contributor to the color of one's stool. Healthy bile is a yellow color and colors the stool a light brown. When bile is toxic it becomes green or dark green, which makes the stool darker in color. Dark brown or blackish colored stools can be a sign the body is dumping toxins from the liver through the bile, particularly if the stool has a strong odor. If the stool is clay-colored (very light), then the gallbladder may be obstructed or the liver is failing to produce sufficient bile.

Of course, specific foods, such as chlorophyll and red beets, will also affect stool color. One can use the coloring effect of these foods to determine one's colon transit time. Transit time is the time it takes for waste material from the food we eat to exit the body. To see what your colon transit time is, try eating some red beets and see how long it takes for the red color of the beets to show up in the stool. Also, see how long it takes before no more red color appears in the stool. If the red color shows up and disappears within 24 hours, you're in good shape. If it takes longer, you have a slow colon transit time—a good indication of the need for a colon cleanse.

If you have red in your stool and haven't been eating beets, you probably have bleeding in the colon or rectum. See a doctor at once to find out what is happening.

Okay, we all know that waste material is supposed to smell, but it isn't supposed to smell that bad! I'm not suggesting that the stool is supposed to smell sweet, it just isn't supposed to smell rotten. Foul belching, gas or stool odor is a sign that food is decomposing in your digestive tract.

Proteins are usually the worst offenders when it comes to creating foul odors—ever smell a rotten egg or piece of fish? So, foul odors are usually a sign that you're not digesting proteins properly. Hydrochloric acid or enzyme supplements will be helpful in breaking down proteins properly. However, general poor digestion, poor elimination and toxicity will contribute to foul odors.

The material above was extracted from *Coming Clean* by Steven Horne, which you can consult for more information on colon health. For help in determining what kinds of supplements or colon cleansing will help restore health to your gastrointestinal tract, seek advice from your local herb specialist or a competent naturopath or holistic doctor. Colon cleansing is a good way to help restore health to your gastrointestinal tract.

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