

## How to Manage

# Bowel Problems



This guide is for men who have had treatment for prostate cancer. The information here is not meant to replace medical advice. For medical advice, speak to your healthcare team.

### Prostate cancer treatments like surgery or radiation can cause problems with your bowels.

#### After treatment you may have:

- Diarrhea (watery bowel movements that happen often)
- Constipation (hard, dry bowel movements)
- Leaking of bowel movements
- Gas
- The sudden, urgent need to have a bowel movement (bowel urgency)
- Blood in your bowel movements.

### What you can do for diarrhea:

Drink eight to twelve glasses of water per day (2-3 litres) to prevent dehydration (when your body does not have enough water).

Do not drink sugary drinks, alcohol or caffeine or hot/cold fluids. These drinks can make your diarrhea worse.

Do not eat spicy or oily foods.

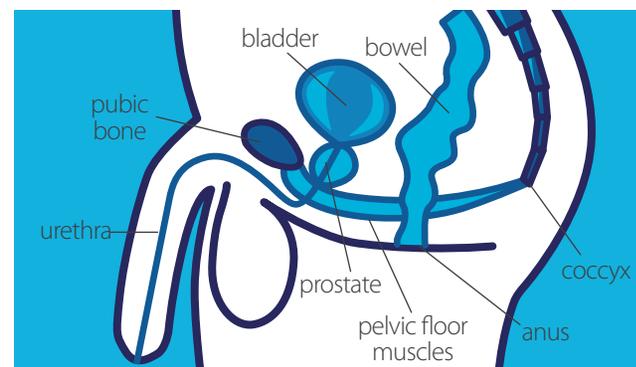
After each bowel movement, wash your anal area with warm water and gently pat dry to prevent skin irritation.

Ask your doctor about moisture products if your anal area gets dry from cleaning.

Talk to your healthcare team before taking over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medication (like Imodium). You can buy this medication at your local pharmacy without a prescription.

Talk to your healthcare team about any bowel problems you have. If you have bowel problems, it may help to keep a journal to write down when and how often you have a bowel movement as well as what you eat.

Once your healthcare team knows more about your bowel problems, they can help you manage your symptoms and treat the problem.



## What you can do for constipation:



**Drink at least 8 - 12 glasses** of fluids a day to keep your bowel movements soft. You can drink:

- Water
- Fruit juice
- Herbal tea
- Milk-based drinks
- Soup

### **Eat foods with fibre to help move your bowels, like:**

- Wholegrain breads
- Cereal
- Pasta
- Fruit
- Vegetables (raw and unpeeled)
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Legumes (baked beans, lentils, chick peas)

**Do not eat fatty or fried foods**, like French fries. These foods are high in salt and can make you more constipated.

**Schedule a routine** for your bowel movements.

**Do some gentle exercise** (like walking) every day.

**Do not to push or strain** during bowel movements.

**Talk to your healthcare team** about over-the-counter laxatives or prescription medication to help you have a bowel movement.

## What you can do for leaking of bowel movements

**Wear a pad or other protection:** You can buy pads for men from supermarkets or pharmacies. Wear the pads with snug underwear, not boxer shorts. To keep your skin clean and dry, change your pads often.



**Practice pelvic floor exercises** to make your pelvic floor muscles stronger. These are the muscles you squeeze to help you hold your bowel movements. Here are the steps to do pelvic floor exercises:

1. Squeeze your pelvic floor muscles, like you are trying not to pass gas.
2. Hold the squeeze for 10 seconds.
3. Relax for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat the squeeze and hold 10 times.
5. Do a set of 10 exercises 3 to 5 times a day.

Ask your healthcare team if you need help with these exercises.

If you have any **bleeding**, let your healthcare team know right away.

## For more information visit the sites below:

### **Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia**

Website: [www.prostate.org.au](http://www.prostate.org.au)

Search term: "Bowel issues after prostate cancer"

### **Prostate Cancer Canada**

Website: [www.prostatecancer.ca](http://www.prostatecancer.ca)

Search term: "Bowel side effects"