

The Poop says it ALL!

I realize the title sounds gross, but you can tell a lot from your bowel movements! When my sons were small and came to me complaining of a tummy ache, the first thing I would ask them was “have you had a good poop today?” If they said no, I would cut up some apples, sprinkle them with cinnamon and serve them up this healthy, nutritious, full of fiber snack with a large glass of water. This trick worked every time (except when one son actually had appendicitis, but that’s another story). More often than not, within an hour or two they would have a good poop and would then feel much better...

Constipation can happen to anyone, some people more readily than others. Too much sugar, too little water, too much fat, too much protein, and too little fiber all can cause problems with your bowel movements. Medications, allergies and food sensitivities can also wreak havoc on your body, causing constipation or diarrhea. Constipation and diarrhea are your body’s way of telling you something is wrong and a warning that you should change your habits. Of course, if either condition lasts longer than a day or too, you should see your doctor as it could be a sign of more serious problems.

If you look at the chart below that categorizes poop with pictures, you will see shapes and consistency from one extreme (constipation) to the opposite (diarrhea) Stage three or four is ideal; your bowel movements should not cause pain, the poop should come out easily, without straining, and in the shape and firmness of a sausage (their words, not mine) or a snake. Regularity is the key, one of these bowel movements a day or every second day is normal.

If you do not fit into the “normal” category indicated in the chart, try increasing your daily intake of water by the glassful or from eating more fresh fruit and vegetables. Taking a pill or other forms of medication (laxatives) to

soften your stools or increase their frequency is only a band-aid fix that can land you in more trouble by causing serious side effects and dependency on the medication. The same thing applies to diarrhea; medication should be a last resort, especially if you suspect the diarrhea is caused by something you have eaten or taken.

If your children automatically look for a snack as soon as they come in the door, consider having cut up fresh fruit or vegetables readily available, with or without a dip. Fresh fruit and vegetables are loaded with fiber and contain a large amount of water, both great for keeping their bowel movements in the healthy zone. Another trick I used when my children were young was to add water to their juice cups. (half and half) They would probably tell you now that it tasted awful, not nearly as sweet as the large glasses of juice, albeit 100% juice with no sugar added, that they consume these days now that they serve themselves...

