

# Digestive Disorders: What Your Poop Type and Color Mean

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## What's Normal?

It can be hard to describe your poop, so doctors use a scale to show the different kinds. It's called the Bristol stool chart, and it gives you an idea of how long a stool spent in your bowel before heading out.

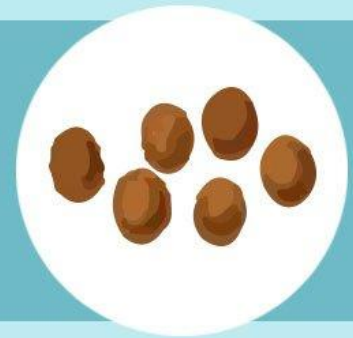


## Type 1

They've spent a long time in your bowel and are tough to pass. If your stool looks like this, you're probably constipated. If it lasts longer than a couple of weeks, see your doctor to find out what's causing it.

### TYPE 1

Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)



## Type 2

This stool also can be a sign that you're constipated. Try to get more fiber in your diet and drink more water to move things along.

### TYPE 2

Sausage-shaped, but lumpy



## Type 3

Doctors think of this kind of poop as normal, because it's soft and easy to pass. If things are going as they should, it shouldn't take longer than a minute on the toilet to push out a poop.

### TYPE 3

Sausage-shaped, but with cracks on surface

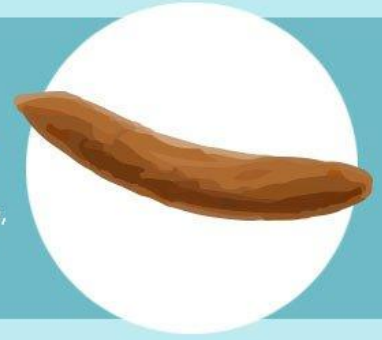


## Type 4

Doctors think of this as poop you want to have. Everyone's bathroom habits are different, but ideally you should have one of these every 1 to 3 days.

### TYPE 4

Sausage- or snake-like, and smooth and soft

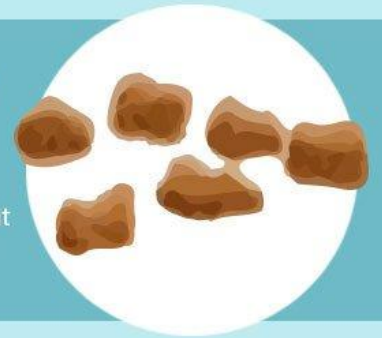


## Type 5

These are easy to pass, but you may feel a sense of urgency about getting to the bathroom. That can be a sign of mild diarrhea. Most of the time, it goes away on its own in a couple of days.

### TYPE 5

Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (easy to pass)

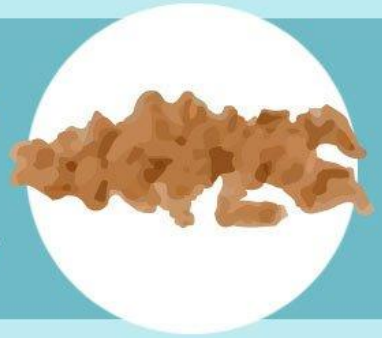


## Type 6

If you have these more than three times a day, you have diarrhea. Make sure to drink plenty of fluids. Water is good, but you also need to replace the minerals you're losing (called electrolytes). Fruit juices and soup can help.

### TYPE 6

Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, mushy



## Type 7

This stool moved through your bowel very quickly. See your doctor if you have more than three of these a day for longer than 2 days. You should check with your doctor if you also have other signs of dehydration (dry mouth, sleepiness, headache, or dizziness), severe pain in your tummy or rear end, or a fever of 102 degrees or higher.

### TYPE 7

Watery, no solid pieces (entirely liquid)



## Color Concerns

Your stool comes in different colors, too. The Bristol stool chart doesn't include color, but you might have questions about that.



### Brown

The color of your stool depends on a couple of things: your diet and how much bile is in it. Bile is a yellow-green fluid that helps digest fats. A healthy stool, then, should reflect a mixture of all the colors of the food you eat and that bile. Almost any shade of brown, or even green, is considered OK.



### Green

It may come as a shock when you see it, but a green poop every once in a while is OK. It may be because you eat a lot of green vegetables (which is good) or too much green food coloring (not so good). It also may mean that your food is moving through your system too quickly -- think diarrhea -- and the green in your bile doesn't have time to break down. If the color doesn't change, see a doctor.



### Shades of Red

This might be from eating too much red food coloring. It can also come from red-colored medicine. Your stool should soon return to its normal color.

But a bright red stool could mean bleeding in your large intestine. Sometimes it's blood from your rectum, too, from a scratch or a hemorrhoid. If you keep passing red stools, check with your doctor.



## Black

If your stool is black, the cause might be an iron supplement or an over-the-counter medicine you took because your stomach felt bad. Or it could even be all that black licorice you downed the night before. If none of these possibilities ring true to you, check with a doctor. A black stool, or one that appears dark maroon, smells bad, and looks tarry, may be a sign of bleeding from high in your digestive tract, like your stomach.



## Lighter Colors

Yellow stools are fine in breastfed infants, but for others, they could be a sign of too much fat. And that could mean your body's having trouble absorbing nutrients like it should. See your doctor. Sometimes, stools can be white or chalky-looking, too. That may be a side effect of some medication, but it also could mean your bile duct is clogged. Your doctor can let you know for sure.



### Sources:

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