










## BOWEL ASSESSMENT

In order to determine the correct treatment pathway, it is essential to undertake a detailed assessment. Components must include an assessment of the persons general health, previous abdominal and colorectal surgery, medications, plus functional ability to reach the toilet, cognition and awareness of bowel sensations, and current bowel management.

### Bowel diary and Food diary:

The essential components for assessing any person with bowel symptoms should include a food diary, and a bowel diary.

### Bristol stool chart:

Bristol Stool Chart		
Type 1		Separated hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear cut edges
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely Liquid

### Symptom impact scores:

There are several tools available to assess bowels. Bowel dysfunction symptoms can be measured by a variation of different scores, some examples are NBD score, Cleveland Clinic Constipation Score, and Wexner score for fecal incontinence. Bristol stool chart may be used as for symptom description. There are also various tools which measure the impact of the bowel symptoms, including quality of life assessment.

**Physical examination:**

In some people it is necessary to perform a rectal examination. This should be only undertaken by a specialist.

**Assessment findings:**

Once a comprehensive bowel assessment has been undertaken, treatments can be planned which identify any dietary and fluid modifications, or interventions aimed at altering stool consistency, and behavior strategies aimed at regular toileting.

There are a number of 'red flags' which may be highlighted if an in-depth bowel assessment is undertaken. These may include reports of blood or mucus in the stools, bowel or rectal pain, spontaneous leakage without any sensation in the absence of neurogenic disease, and...

**IF ANY RED FLAGS are discovered during the assessment it is important to refer the individual to their GP as soon as possible, and document this.**

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