



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO HEALTHIER POOP

A good night's sleep and a good poop are solid and essential foundations to improving your child's health. From our perspective, however, most parents and even some pediatricians are not aware of what a healthy poop is. We realize this is a delicate subject for many people to talk about, but poop is an excellent indicator for the health of the body, so it's helpful to know what a good poop is and isn't.

WHAT IS A GOOD POOP?

A good poop means that:

- Your child is not straining when pooping
- Your child is pooping **AT LEAST** once per day, if not more, as long as it's not diarrhea
- Your child's poop is solid and not of a diarrhea consistency and not formed into pellets
- Your child's poop is formed, either as a pile of mush or like a long sausage. See the [Bristol Stool Chart](#) for graphic depictions.

WHAT ISN'T A GOOD POOP?

Most of this may seem obvious, but for thoroughness, here's what a good poop isn't:

- Pooping infrequently (going once every couple of days is too infrequent!)
- Pooping too frequently (more than four or five times a day may be too frequent)
- Experiencing pain or difficulty when stooling
- Diarrhea
- Stools that are loose and not well-formed
- Blood, mucous or foam in the stools
- Stools that are frequently pale, white, or black
- Stools that are thin, stringy or "pencil shaped"
- Stools that contain large, undigested chunks of food

WHY IS POOP QUALITY IMPORTANT?

What is going on in your child's tummy can not only determine what their poop looks like but also their mood, energy level, weight issues, rashes and so much more. Almost everything about health and physiology can be tied to the 100 trillion+ microscopic organisms that are hiding deep within, and those intestinal microbes are what make up a significant portion of poop. These microbes are most often bacteria, but can also be viruses, parasites and yeasts.

WHAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ABNORMAL STOOLING?

If you notice some of these abnormal poop symptoms in your child, it might be worthwhile to evaluate the health of the microbes (also known as flora) living in his/her gastrointestinal tract. We'll cover tests that you can ask your integrative health practitioner about later in this e-book.

Disturbance to the gut bacteria and the metabolites they produce (called the microbiome) can lead to intestinal dysbiosis, also known as [gut dysbiosis](#). Dysbiosis is when the amount of beneficial microbes in the gut is too low or out of balance, and this can have a major impact on health.

WHAT CAUSES DYSBIOSIS?

A number of factors can affect microbial composition, including:

- Chronic stress
- Age
- Contaminants in the environment
- [Food sensitivities](#)
- Environmental sensitivities
- Heredity (we inherit microbes from our parents, but especially from our mother)
- Malnutrition
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Method of birth delivery (vaginal vs. Caesarean). Babies born via Caesarean section do not pick up the mother's flora because they do not pass through the vaginal canal and do not come near the mother's anal area.
- Use of antibiotics and other medications
- Diet, which is the most important factor. We'll cover diets and food choices that can help or hurt poop quality later in this e-book.

WHY DOES DYSBIOSIS MATTER?

Some microbes can cause gas, bloating, fat malabsorption and can also be responsible for diarrhea or produce toxins that damage the lining of the intestine and even prevent the body from absorbing essential nutrients.

Dysbiosis can have a profound effect on both the first and second lines of defense in the immune system. Many good, healthy microbes (known as probiotics) can protect from bad microbes and can help regulate immune function. Essentially, dysbiosis can trigger or promote inflammation because the lack of healthy flora and the influence of harmful flora can cause the immune system to malfunction (known as [immune dysregulation](#)). A malfunction in the immune system can often lead to a chronic health condition. In fact, it is extremely common that a person with a chronic health condition has gut dysbiosis, immune dysregulation and pooping problems. People with autoimmune and neurological conditions (including mood disorders) are extremely likely to have these problems.

If your child demonstrates any of the aforementioned poop symptoms, it may be a warning sign that his/her immune system is compromised.

The most disruptive type of dysbiosis happens mainly in the digestive tract and the skin, but really, it can be found on any exposed surface or mucous membrane, such as the vagina, lungs, mouth, nose, sinuses, ears, nails or eyes. **The only way** to properly treat dysbiosis is to increase the diversity of "good" microbes and reduce populations of bad bacteria, yeast and parasites, all of which can be considered infections that fall under the radar of routine medical tests and procedures. We'll discuss various methods of increasing good microbes later in this e-book.

TYPES OF DYSBIOSIS

There are five common types of dysbiosis. Unfortunately, your child can have more than one kind of dysbiosis at the same time. These five types are:

Insufficient Good Microbes

This simply means that there is a shortage of beneficial microbes. Nature loves diversity—this goes for the microbiome, too! Greater diversity of commensal or symbiotic microbes is correlated with a healthier microbiome and better health in general.

Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO)

SIBO means there's too much of a good thing in the wrong place. SIBO occurs in the upper part of the small intestine when microbes from the large intestine grow in the wrong place, which can cause digestive symptoms like heartburn or reflux, bloating, gas or muscle pain. A special kind of breath test can help you discover if your child has SIBO or not.

Immunosuppressive Dysbiosis

Harmful bacteria, yeast, or parasites can lower levels of good microbes and can give off toxins that in turn break down or weaken the gut lining. This can lead to leaky gut syndrome,



which means that the intestines have become too permeable and allow things to pass through the gut lining that normally don't. When this happens, the body will often attack these waste products, and this can lead to gastrointestinal symptoms.

Inflammatory Dysbiosis

This type of dysbiosis occurs when the body has an exaggerated response to an imbalance of microbes in the digestive system. It includes digestive symptoms like bloating and gas, and is commonly seen in autoimmune disease.

Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, cramping, and bloating, but they can also be silent and cause no obvious gut symptoms. Parasites may even trigger allergic or inflammatory symptoms such as hives or the development of food and environmental allergies that your child never had before.

You can think about these types of dysbiosis as infections that aren't detected by routine medical tests or procedures, but they are really red flags that something is out of balance in your child's diet, lifestyle or environment.

WHAT NOT TO DO FOR POOPING PROBLEMS

Your child's doctor may prescribe a laxative such as MiraLAX for your child's constipation. However, laxatives are not to be used for long periods of time or as a substitute for a medical work-up if your child has chronic constipation due to leaky gut issues and other gastrointestinal problems.

In addition, in December 2011, the U.S. Federal Drug Administration (FDA) [placed laxatives containing Polyethylene Glycol 3350 \(PEG\)](#) on its Adverse Event Reporting System (AERS) in connection to neuropsychiatric events. These PEG laxatives are marketed under brands such as MiraLAX and Dulcolax. Instead of using laxatives to help with pooping problems, we recommend that you try the many suggestions in this e-book first.

WHAT CAN HELP WITH POOPING PROBLEMS

All of the following suggestions can help with increasing good microbes in the body and may thus help with pooping problems. A lot of these action items can be done at home, but we recommend working with a [functional or integrative practitioner](#), such as a naturopath, for oversight.

Removing Offending Foods

[Foods containing gluten \(wheat, barley and rye, as well as oats that are not certified gluten-free\) as well as dairy \(milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, etc.\)](#) are often huge culprits in constipation and diarrhea. These days, it seems as if most of our kids' diets are made up of or contain these two types of foods (pizza, chicken nuggets, cheeseburgers, etc.) While it may seem difficult at first to switch to foods that don't contain these foods, there are more alternative foods available now than ever before. Of course, cooking your meals from scratch is always, in our opinion, the best option, and it might be a fun challenge for you and your child to explore new recipes. Our recommendation is to find a handful or two of gluten- and dairy-free meals and foods before you go cold turkey and go 100% gluten-free and/or dairy-free.

If you can commit to this for at least a month or more, you may find that there are additional surprising benefits other than just better pooping. You may also discover that other symptoms may also improve such as:

- Sleep
- Attention
- Focus
- Allergies
- Mood problems
- Behavioral problems
- Pain

Your child's pediatrician may be skeptical of cutting out these foods, so you could show him or her [this study](#) that shows how symptoms of children and adults with autism improved significantly after cutting out foods containing gluten and dairy (as well as soy) while adding in a few basic supplements. While your child may not have a health challenge as severe as autism, you may want to consider that if these kinds of interventions can help people with autism, then they may also be able to help your child.

In addition, the proof is in the pudding! Many, many parents were met with skepticism from their pediatricians, allergists, immunologists, neurologists and gastroenterologists about removing these foods but went ahead and eliminated them anyway. These parents were pleasantly surprised at how much this one thing improved their kids'

health, and it was, for many, enough proof to them to keep going and to also ask, "If this was helpful, what else could be helpful?"

Another thing that could be helpful is to identify other potentially offending foods by doing an [elimination diet](#). For many children, gluten and dairy are typical offenders, but other foods such as eggs, corn, soy, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, citrus and chocolate (!) may be underlying symptoms.

Following a Gut-Healing Diet

Ready to take it a step further? There are a number of gut-healing diets that work to improve the gut microbiome, lower inflammation and get the immune system working better, which is mostly located in the gut. All of these things can contribute to healthier poop and lower symptoms.

Look into the following healing diets and pick one that you think you'd be able to do and that could help your child:

- [GAPS \(Gut And Psychology Syndrome\) diet](#)
- [Feingold diet](#)
- [Body Ecology Diet](#)
- [Specific Carbohydrate Diet \(SCD\)](#)
- Paleo diet
- [The Rotation Diet](#)

Adding in Fermented Foods

Fermented foods contain cultures of probiotic bacteria and yeast that feed off of carbohydrates, including sugars. These cultures usually create a tangy or sour taste, which makes these foods delicious! Eating fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, kim chi and sauerkraut is an easy way to incorporate probiotics into the diet.

Our general recommendation is not to eat store-bought yogurt, as it is typically not fermented for long enough and may contain unwanted additives such as sugar and thickeners. Some exceptions may apply, but you'll have to do your homework and read labels to figure out which ones are beneficial. You'll need to remember, though, that if your child has a dairy sensitivity that this often applies to yogurt as well, so you'd want to try a coconut yogurt, for example, instead.

We recommend that you make your own fermented foods! You can [buy cultures](#) to make homemade kefir and fermented veggies but you can also make lacto-brined vegetables such as kim chi and sauerkraut with just sea salt! A quick internet search should yield easy-to-make recipes.

Getting more probiotics into the diet with fermented foods is a time-honored method of easing digestive issues and improving pooping problems.

Getting Enough Water

Adequate water intake is key to pooping well! Some people can relieve pooping problems simply by increasing the amount of water they drink every day, although usually more than just this needs to be done.

Adding in Supplements

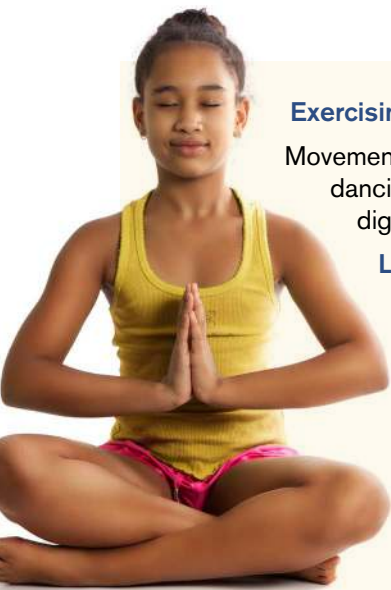
Work with a [functional or integrative practitioner](#), such as a naturopath, for recommendations for supplements that can help relieve pooping problems and gastrointestinal issues. In general, lab tests may be performed (see next section) to uncover underlying issue(s). Ask your practitioner about:

- Digestive enzymes
- Probiotics
- Magnesium (usually magnesium citrate or magnesium oxide)
- Licorice root
- Marshmallow root
- Vitamin C
- Aloe vera juice
- Peppermint tea
- Fennel tea

Using a Squatty Potty or Stool

Sitting in a position that's more aligned with gravity's effect on the body can tremendously help to take away the need for straining to poop, which can be damaging. Using a Squatty Potty or small stepstool placed in front of the toilet and under the feet helps to better align the body.





Exercising

Movement that involves rhythmic movement of the legs such as running, walking, cycling, swimming and dancing can help the body's peristalsis to move food and waste properly through and out of the digestive tract. Get moving!

Lowering Stress

A body in a state of stress is less likely to have a properly operating digestive tract. Many people experience stress in their guts, and this can lead to pooping problems, especially constipation. Try a variety of stress-reducing techniques and therapies to see if they help, such as:

- [Craniosacral therapy](#)
- Massage
- Yoga
- Pranayama breathing
- Gardening
- Socializing
- Exercising
- Meditation
- Prayer
- [EMDR \(Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing\)](#)
- [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT, aka tapping\)](#)
- [Acupuncture](#)

[Acupuncture in particular has been medically and clinically documented to overcome gastroparesis](#) and improve gastrointestinal motility, especially in the cases of type 1 diabetes.

Type 1 diabetics often experience a slowing or halting of peristalsis because of the damage done by the disease to the vagus nerve that connects the brain and spine to the organs of the body. Because acupuncture can stimulate the vagus nerve as well as other systems in the body, it is [well documented to relieve constipation](#).

Fecal Transplants

Microbiota transfer therapy, otherwise known as a [fecal transplant](#), is the physical act of transferring poop from a healthy donor to a recipient that has a microbiome that skews unhealthy. Recipients often have antibiotic-resistant strains of pathogenic bacteria such as Clostridiales (especially *C. difficile*) and Bacteroides in the gut that are causing neurological, digestive and immunological problems. What's interesting is that these pathogens are associated with higher risk of poorer communication, social and emotional skills, as well as poorer fine motor skills.

What's even more interesting is that colonization with gut microbiota from a child with autism is sufficient to induce hallmark autistic behaviors. Given that up to 90% of people with autism suffer from gut problems, it makes sense that improving the gut microbiome may help with symptoms.

While most physicians are likely not aware of the existence or potential benefits of fecal transplants, there are [promising research studies](#) that have been done (see especially [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). A word of caution: This should not be undertaken at home and should be done under the care of a qualified health practitioner.

Colon Therapy

Colon therapy, also known as a colonic, is a process in which a speculum is placed into the rectum and then clean water is allowed to travel into the colon. When the therapist believes that the water has hit a blockage, the flow is reversed, and water plus poop comes out. The process is repeated a few times per visit. Many times, the therapist will massage the abdomen to encourage blocked poop to move out.

Although the thought of having a colonic may make a person squeamish or anxious, people who have tried it generally feel much better and lighter afterwards, as if a weight has been lifted. It's helpful to know that the treatment area and equipment are scrubbed down and sterilized after each treatment.

Availability depends on the state in which you live, as some states allow it, and some don't. We generally don't recommend having this done for a younger child, but a more mature child or adult who doesn't feel coerced or forced into the procedure may benefit from it.

Castor Oil Packs

These packs are an old home remedy in which a piece of flannel is warmed and then soaked with castor oil. The flannel is then placed on the abdomen and sometimes covered with plastic wrap, if you choose. A rubber hot water bottle is then placed on top. This procedure is often enough to relieve lower abdominal issues, and it's best done when a child is lying or sitting somewhat still, as when reading a book.



IF PROBLEMS PERSIST, HAVE YOUR CHILD TESTED

As mentioned earlier, there are a variety of tests that your [integrative healthcare practitioner](#) can order for you and then analyze. There are many gastrointestinal tract tests that are available, but the most commonly ordered tests are:

- **Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA):** This test is used to test for possible [food sensitivities and allergies](#).
- **Organic Acid Test (OAT):** This urine test checks for overgrowth of bacterial and yeast pathogens whose metabolites show up in urine.
- **GI Effects® Comprehensive Profile:** This poop test can identify maldigestion, inflammation, dysbiosis, metabolite imbalance and infection
- **Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO):** As the name implies, this breath test evaluates bacterial overgrowth of the small intestine.
- **Parasitology:** This stool test looks for the presence of intestinal parasites, using microscopic examination. Caveat: Parasite tests are not 100% effective at discovering the presence of parasites.
- **Motility/transit test:** You can do this yourself at home by having your child eat beets and then checking the next set of daily poops for when the beet coloration appears. Slow motility (movement through the gastrointestinal tract) may indicate vagal nerve damage and/or [mitochondrial dysfunction](#).
- **Baking soda test:** This home test involves drinking a quarter teaspoon of baking soda mixed into four ounces of water on an empty stomach. If your child burps within three minutes of drinking this, they typically have enough stomach acid for good digestion. A longer response time indicates low stomach acid, which could hamper digestion as well as contribute to the colonization of pathogens that weren't killed by stomach acid further down the gastrointestinal tract. While this test isn't definitive, it is a good starting point for you to work with your child's practitioner.

IN CONCLUSION

Paying attention to your child's stool patterns, habits (and yes, the actual poop itself!) can give you tremendous insight into the dysbiosis that may be present in your child's body. Talk to your [integrative healthcare practitioner](#) about what you notice with your child's poop, and together you can get closer to identifying the root causes of your child's varied symptoms.

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