

The chew: Let's talk about digestive and colon health

Why is poop such an awkward topic to discuss? Kids and tweens love to chatter on (and on) about it. The poop emoji is one of the most used icons ever¹ and has made its way onto everything from stickers and T-shirts to bed linens. It makes perfect sense—we all do it.



The amazing thing about poop is that it's a window to your health and possible digestive issues. Texture, color, frequency and smell can provide clues to the health of your entire digestive system and even your overall health.²



Poop facts

Optimal poop is brown and soft, smooth and easy to pass.

Poop can change from day to day depending on what you eat, how much you drink and how active you are.

Pebble-like pieces are a sign of constipation.

"Being regular" is different for every person. This can range from three times a day to three times a week.

Foods you eat and medications you take may cause changes in color. Consistent green, yellow, black, gray or red stools are indications that all is not as it should be.

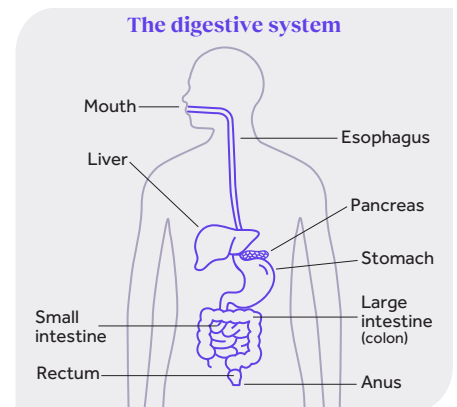
Healthy colon = healthy you

Observing your digestive health is important to your overall health. Colorectal cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer death in the U.S., but it doesn't have to be.³ Regular colorectal cancer screening is one of the most powerful tools for preventing this type of cancer.⁴ And early detection offers more treatment options. It's recommended that colon cancer screenings start at age 45 and continue at regular intervals based on individual risk factors.

There are several options when it comes to screenings:⁴

- At-home tests allow you collect samples and return them to a lab. These can be done on one- to three-year intervals.
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy checks for polyps or cancer inside the rectum and lower third of the colon. It is usually repeated every five years.
- A colonoscopy allows doctors to physically examine the entire colon and remove polyps and even some cancers. This exam is usually repeated every 10 years.
- A CT colonography is a virtual examination of the colon using X-rays and computers. This is usually repeated every five years.

Earlier testing or repeat testing at shorter intervals may be warranted if you suffer from things like inflammatory bowel disease or have a family history of polyps or colorectal cancer. Your doctor can guide you through which test is best for you.



Fiber is your friend

One of the keys to keeping your digestive system moving is eating the right foods. It's recommended that we eat between 25 and 35 grams of fiber each day.⁵ Balanced nutrition that includes fruits and vegetables is your best chance at hitting those numbers. Adding high fiber grains and legumes is also an excellent choice.

Consider these options to help get your daily dose:⁶



Black beans

cooked ½ cup = 8 grams fiber



Green peas

cooked ½ cup = 5 grams fiber



Raspberries

1 cup = 5 grams fiber



Lentils

cooked ½ cup = 8 grams fiber



Pear

(with skin)
1 medium = 7 grams fiber



Broccoli

1 cup = 5 grams fiber



Apple

(with skin)
1 medium = 5 grams fiber



Baked sweet potato

(with skin)
1 cup = 6 grams fiber



Almonds

1 oz = 4 grams fiber



Cranberry almond crunch

Makes: 6 servings | Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 20 mins

It's not hard to reach your daily fiber goals when you pair delicious fruits and grains. This quick and easy recipe can be eaten as a breakfast cereal or used to top a low-fat protein like yogurt, silken tofu or cottage cheese.⁷

Ingredients

- 2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
- ½ cup wheat or rye bran flakes
- ½ cup slivered almonds or any chopped nuts (hazelnuts, pecans or walnuts)
- ¼ cup unroasted, unsalted pumpkin or sunflower seeds
- ½ cup flaked coconut
- ½ cup dried cranberries, cherries, currants or raisins
- ½ cup diced dried apricots, apples, dates or figs
- 2 Tbsp ground flaxseeds (optional)
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- ½ Tbsp cinnamon
- ½ Tbsp dried ginger
- Pinch of salt

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spread oats and wheat bran on a large baking sheet. Toast for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally to avoid burning. Add almonds, pumpkin seeds and coconut to oat mixture. Stir, spreading on the baking sheet. Toast for an additional 7 to 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly browned. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Transfer the oat mixture to a large bowl. Add cranberries and apricots and if desired, flaxseed; mix. Heat honey in a microwave-safe bowl for about 15 seconds. Add vanilla, cinnamon and ginger to honey and blend. Pour over oat mixture and toss to coat.

Nutrition

Serving size: ¾ cup



Calories: 350 | total fat: 12 g | saturated fat: 3 g | sodium: 55 mg | cholesterol: 0 mg
total carbs: 54 g | fiber: 8 g | sugars: 25 g | protein: 10 g | potassium: 237 mg

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¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poop_emoji

²<https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/BristolStoolScalePatientHandout-th.pdf>

³<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>

⁴<https://www.cdc.gov/colorectal-cancer/screening/index.html>

⁵<https://gi.org/topics/digestive-health-tips/>

⁶<https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials/food-sources-select-nutrients/food-sources-fiber>

⁷<https://www.eatright.org/recipes/breakfast/cranberry-almond-breakfast-cereal-recipe>