

Dietary Management for ABL



Penn Urogynecology



Table of Contents

Accidental Bowel Leakage	3
Common Causes of ABL	4
The Story of the Food We Eat.....	5
Healthy Diet for Senior Women	6
Diet Strategies for ABL.....	8
Managing ABL Triggers.....	10
Fiber Supplementation	11
Definitions	14



Accidental Bowel Leakage (ABL)

What is ABL?

Accidental bowel leakage (ABL), also called fecal incontinence (FI), is the accidental passage of formed, soft and/or liquid fecal matter from the rectum. The accidental passage of fecal matter can occur with a strong urge to move the bowels, often when on the way to the toilet, or can happen without any warning. Sometimes people find their underwear soiled with liquid fecal matter, pieces of feces, or a full bowel movement.



ABL is a medical problem that affects almost 18 million adults in the United States. It affects all age groups but is more common in older adults and especially in older women. It is important to talk to your health care provider about your bowel leakage problem because there are many different reasons why accidents might occur. Before starting any of the strategies included in this booklet, it is important to discuss them first with your health care provider.



Common Causes of ABL

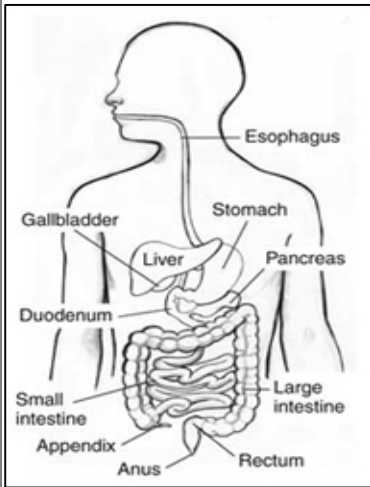
Many factors can affect our ability to control bowel movements.



- If the fecal matter moves too quickly through the colon (e.g. infection, use of laxatives, or irritable bowel syndrome), the waste remains liquid and is very difficult to control.
- If the fecal matter moves too slowly through the colon more water is absorbed causing bowel movements to become hard and difficult to pass. Slowing of the colon can be caused by inactivity, medications, a diet low in fiber, or medical problems. Sometimes liquid feces will accumulate behind pieces of hard fecal matter and start to seep out.
- The sphincter muscle might be damaged or weak, possibly due to childbirth or another trauma, making it difficult to delay a bowel movement or can allow feces to sneak out without awareness.
- Damage to nerves can impair the ability to feel or be aware of the need to have a bowel movement.
- As we age, the ability to digest food changes. Because of this, older people are at higher risk to develop changes in bowel movement frequency, consistency and control.
- ABL leakage may also be heredity, or an inherited characteristic from a family member.



The Story of the Food We Eat

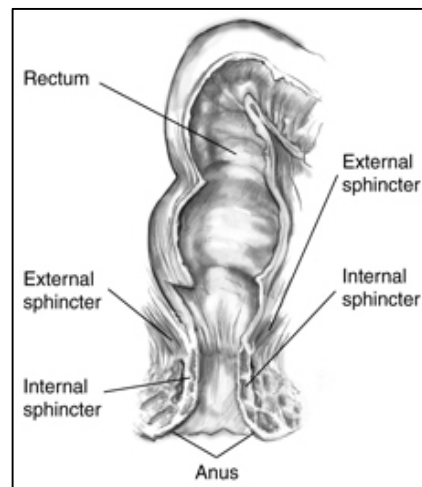


When we enjoy a good meal, there are a number of important things that happen in order for our bodies to benefit from the nutrients found in the food. Digestion, which is the process by which our body breaks down food into absorbable components starts as soon as we chew our first bite.

Our digestive track, which is a series of connected organs, enzymes, hormones, and bacteria, works to break down the food so that our body can use it.

By the time the food gets to the **colon**, the last organ in the system, it is a slushy-like liquid of waste material made up of things that our body does not need or cannot absorb. The job of the colon is to retrieve some last bits of nutrients but primarily to absorb water.

At the end of the colon is the **rectum** and the anus. The rectum holds waste material or feces until we reach a toilet. The **anus**, which is the final exit, is made up of muscles (sphincter) and very specialized sensory nerves.



The **sensory nerves** tell us if feces are gas, liquid, or solid. In other words, the nerves gauge whether we can wait or need to hurry to the toilet. The muscles help hold back the passage of feces until we get to the toilet.

Healthy Diet for Senior Women

Eating well is important at all stages of your life. As you age, selecting nutritious foods becomes even more important. Food choices can make a huge difference in your health, improve your self esteem, and keep you healthier longer!

MyPlate for Older Adults

Fruits & Vegetables

Whole fruits and vegetables are rich in important nutrients and fiber. Choose fruits and vegetables with deeply colored flesh. Choose canned varieties that are packed in their own juices or low-sodium.

Healthy Oils

Liquid vegetable oils and soft margarines provide important fatty acids and some fat-soluble vitamins.

Herbs & Spices

Use a variety of herbs and spices to enhance flavor of foods and reduce the need to add salt.



Fluids

Drink plenty of fluids. Fluids can come from water, tea, coffee, soups, and fruits and vegetables.

Grains

Whole grain and fortified foods are good sources of fiber and B vitamins.

Dairy

Fat-free and low-fat milk, cheeses and yogurts provide protein, calcium and other important nutrients.

Protein

Protein rich foods provide many important nutrients. Choose a variety including nuts, beans, fish, lean meat and poultry.



Remember to Stay Active!

Tufts
UNIVERSITY

JEAN WALKER
USDA
HUMAN
NUTRITION
RESEARCH
CENTER ON
AGING
HNRCA

AARP Foundation®

MyPlate for Older Adults offers portion suggestions to help guide your meal decisions.

Dietary Recommendations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) created the following **daily** dietary guidelines for senior individuals. Meet as many targets as you can everyday!

Fruit - 1 ½ -2 ½ cups

*Ex. 16 grapes or a peach is a **half** cup of fruit*

Vegetables - 2-3 ½ cups

*Ex. Two handfuls of uncooked green, leafy vegetables is **one** cup of vegetables*

Grains - 5-10 ounces

*Ex. A slice of whole grain bread is about **one** ounce of grains*

Protein foods - 5-7 ounces

*Ex. One egg is **one** ounce of protein*

Dairy foods - 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat dairy

*Ex. Two tablespoons of cottage cheese are the same as a **half** cup of dairy*

Oils - 5-8 teaspoons

Be modest with oils and avoid fats that are solid at room temperature

Quick Reference

3 ounces of meat or poultry

1 deck of cards



1 cup of salad greens

1 baseball



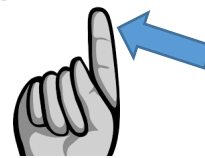
1½ ounces of cheese

4 dice



1 teaspoon of butter or margarine

Tip of your first finger



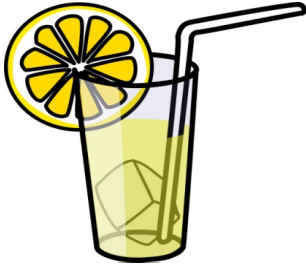
1 cup of cereal

1 fist



Diet Strategies for ABL

Maintain a Healthy Diet



Keeping a healthy diet and regular exercise is a great way to keep the bowel healthy. Maintaining normal hydration is healthy for the whole body, but especially for the colon. Drinking fluids, especially water, will help prevent constipation.

Trigger Identification

Monitoring your diet and bowel movements can help identify foods that affect your ABL. A helpful monitoring tool is called a bowel journal, or a log, which tracks your diet and bowel characteristics for a few weeks. Remember to share this log with your healthcare provider during your next appointment. Together you can review the journal to identify foods that trigger or aggravate your ABL. Below, there is an example of a bowel journal.

Date: Sunday, January 1, 2017

Time	Meal/Food Intake	BM?	Stool Score	Urgency Y=Yes, N=No	ABL S=Small, M=Medium, L=Large	Comments	Bristol Stool Score
9 am	Oatmeal						
11 am		✓	7	Y		Ran to the bathroom	
12 pm	Almonds Apple						
2 pm	Brown rice Ground turkey Vegetables						
6 pm	Chicken Mashed potatoes Gravy						
7 pm		✓	6	Y	M		

BM = Bowel Movement
ABL = Accidental Bowel Leakage

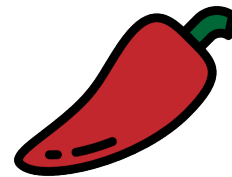
Common triggers are noted on the next page. However, every individual is unique. Finding your distinctive triggers can help you manage your ABL and regain control of your life!



Common Food Triggers

The following foods, or food additives, may aggravate bowel leakage:

- Foods with fructose, sorbitol, or artificial sweeteners
- Caffeine
- Dairy
- Certain vegetables and fruits such as figs, cabbage, and beans
- Greasy or oily foods
- Magnesium based supplements
- Spicy foods
- Alcohol
- Sugarless gum
- Excess vitamin/mineral supplements



Managing ABL Triggers

Elimination Method

Using a Bowel Journal can help you to identify foods that trigger your ABL. Temporarily eliminating, or removing, these foods from your diet can help you control your ABL! Many women begin with caffeine and fat as these ingredients commonly worsen ABL. Consider eliminating potential triggers from your diet and monitor the effect on your ABL.

Portion Control

Women report that the volume of food they eat seriously affects their ABL. Consuming large amounts of food resulted in increased frequency of trips to the bathroom and bowel leakage. Eating small amounts of food more frequently, instead of larger amounts in one sitting, can reduce the amount of waste you will need to later eliminate and the risk of leakage. Plating your food on a reasonably size plate using the guidelines on page 6 can help you maintain portion control.

Planning Ahead

Although common treatments for ABL often involve restricting your diet, it may be nice to occasionally treat yourself with a favorite food. If you believe this food will irritate your ABL, plan accordingly. Be prepared to do it while at home or where you have comfortable access to a restroom.

Fiber Supplementation

It is recommended that senior women consume at least 22 grams of fiber every day. However, many women do not eat enough fiber each day.

Foods High in Fiber Help ABL

One component of the diet that is particularly healthy for the bowel is fiber. Fiber is found in plants such as fruits, vegetables and grains.

How to Start a High Fiber Eating Plan to Help ABL

1. Start slowly with small amounts of fiber.
Your body needs time to adjust.
2. If you feel gas or bloating, which is common, only add a little bit more fiber each day.
3. Make sure that you drink plenty of fluids.
4. Add fiber at each meal.
 - add a bran muffin to your breakfast
 - start the day with a high fiber cereal
 - snack on raw vegetables or dried fruit
 - add an apple to lunch
 - choose soups with beans as the main ingredient
 - add nuts to your salad
 - replace breadcrumbs with unprocessed bran as a “filler” in recipes

Some foods high in soluble fiber are:

Oat bran
Barley
Nuts and Seeds
Beans and Lentils
Peas
Avocados
Raw spinach
Raw onions



Sample, High Fiber Meal Plan

Using a supplement is an effective way to increase your daily fiber intake. However, making strategic choices when it comes to your meals is an effective way to consume the recommended value of dietary fiber while consuming a balanced diet. See below for an example meal plan.

Breakfast

1 Cup Almond Milk
1 Large Apple
¼ Cup of Steel Oats w/ 12 Almonds

Fiber: 1g+4g+4g= 9g

Lunch

Black Bean Burger on 2 Slices of Whole Wheat Bread
Sweet Potato Fries (1 Serving, 18 pieces)

Fiber: 8g+3g=11g

Dinner

1 Cup Cooked Brown Rice
½ Cup of Steamed Spinach
¼ Cup Lima Beans
4 Oz. Oven Baked Chicken

Fiber: 3.5g+2g+8g+0g=13.5g

Healthy Snacks

Hummus and 1 Medium Carrot

Fiber:1g+1g= 2g

1 Cup Diced Pineapple

Fiber: 3g

Total Fiber: 6g+11g+13.5g+2g+3g= 38.5g

Stay Away From These Fiber Sources

Processed Foods
Boxed Foods
Refined Fiber

Read the fiber booklet for additional, high-fiber meal plans!

How to Use A Psyllium Supplement:

There are many types of fiber supplements. Research shows Psyllium is the best for treating ABL.

Psyllium fiber comes from the outer coating of the psyllium plant's seeds. Psyllium is commonly used to treat both constipation and loose stools.

- Start with a low dose – ½ tsp in 8 oz. of water/1 capsule
- Gradually increase the dose (as needed).
- Take your Psyllium 1hr before or 2-4 hours after taking other medications
- Always mix/take with 8 oz. of fluid
- Always take your fiber supplement when sitting in the upright position
- **DO NOT** take psyllium if you are having difficulty swallowing.

A potential side effect from any fiber product is gas and bloating. This tends to get better after about a month.

Where do I Find Psyllium?

- Konsyl Original, Orange Extra Strength, Capsules – both are sugar free, the orange flavor uses stevia as a sweetener
- Metamucil (contains sugar), Metamucil Sugar Free Orange, Capsules
- Generic Brands are available at many pharmacies and food stores (some have sugar added, others do not). Common names used include “psyllium husks”; “psyllium”; psyllium seed husks” “psyllium fiber”. Be sure to read the label to be sure you are getting pure psyllium and not a mix of psyllium and other additives.

Definitions



Accidental Bowel Leakage (ABL)-The inability to control the bowel which can lead to solid or liquid stool leakage.

Diet Modification- A diet that excludes certain components to improve a particular health condition.

Psyllium- A form of fiber that come from a flower. It is commonly used to treat bowel conditions.

Sphincter- A ring of muscle that 'guards' or 'closes' an opening or tube. In this case, it is referring to the anal sphincter, near the rectum.

Trigger- Something that intensifies ABL symptoms. A trigger may have been identified using a bowel journal.

Urogynecology - Branch of medicine that deals with the dysfunction of the pelvic floor and bladder.



