

Third and fourth degree tears: advice for opening your bowels








After third and fourth degree tears it is particularly important that you have formed but soft bowel movements (stools). Type 3-4 (see chart below) is the recommended consistency of stool. If your stools are too loose (Type 5-6), they may be difficult to control. If your stools are too hard (Type 1-2), they can be painful and difficult to pass and could potentially cause further damage.

You will be provided with laxatives to help your stools to be soft and easy to pass. We recommend you have a good, varied and healthy diet with plenty of fluid and fibre, including fruit and vegetables.

The diagram overleaf demonstrates the correct position for opening your bowels. It shows the use of a footstool so that your knees are slightly higher than your hips. You may also find it helpful and more comfortable to apply a gentle, upwards pressure externally over the perineum (between the vagina and the back passage), using a pad of toilet paper to support the stitches.

At 10 days after having your baby your midwife will advise you to start weaning off your laxatives, unless she has any concerns about your healing. Once you have been discharged from the midwife, please make an appointment with your GP if you have any concerns about how your tear is healing.

THE BRISTOL STOOL FORM SCALE

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID

Contact details

Therapy Services Poole: 0300 019 2121

Therapy Services Christchurch: 0300 019 4418

Correct position for opening your bowels

Step one



Knees higher than hips

Step two



Lean forwards and put elbows on your knees

Step three

Bulge out your abdomen
Straighten your spine



Correct position

Knees higher than hips
Lean forwards and put elbows on your knees
Bulge out your abdomen
Straighten your spine



Reproduced by the kind permission of Ray Addison, Nurse Consultant in Bladder and Bowel Dysfunction
Wendy Ness, Colorectal Nurse Specialist.
Produced as a service to the medical profession by Norgine Ltd.

Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB
Christchurch Hospital, Fairmile Road, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 2JX

Author: **Lisa Drury** Date: **Jan 2022** Version: **One** Review date: **Jan 2025** Ref: **013/22**

w: www.uhd.nhs.uk : @UHD_NHS : @UHTrust : @uhd_nhs