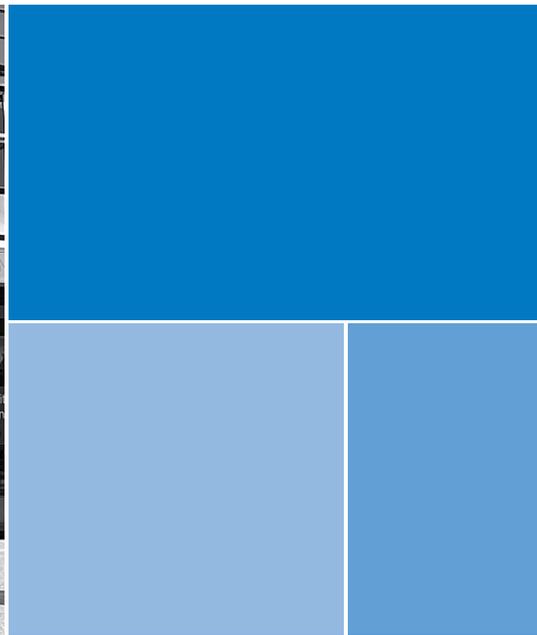




**James Paget
University Hospitals**
NHS Foundation Trust

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy Emptying Your Bowels



Patient Information

Emptying your bowels (defaecation) is something we do automatically most of the time. Sometimes we can experience difficulty emptying our bowels, which might cause us to strain or make us feel that we have not emptied fully. This leaflet will give you some information on effective positioning and the right way to use your muscles to help.

Good muscle control

There is a basic pattern of muscle control when opening your bowels. When we open our bowels naturally we should become pear-shaped. This means our lower body widens and bulges. If you are straining, your tummy muscles may be pulled in the opposite direction and your anus (back passage) may close. This makes it more difficult to empty your bowels.

Test your muscles like this:

- Sit forward in a chair
- Place one hand on your waist, resting on your hip bone and the other on your lower abdomen
- Pretend you are opening your bowels

You should feel a widening of your waist. At the same time your abdominal muscles should move out into your other hand as your anus opens.

Effective positioning for opening your bowels

The most natural position for humans to empty their bowels is to squat. It is ideal to try and adopt the position, as shown in the image on the right, to make it easier for you to go. When you are in the right position it helps your muscles to relax, making it easier to open your bowels. Follow the instructions below and use this picture to help you to open your bowels.

- Sit comfortably on the toilet and relax
- Keep your knees apart and higher than your hips (you may need a footstool)
- Lean forwards and rest your forearms on your thighs whilst keeping your back straight
- Let your tummy relax, widen your waist and allow your abdominal muscles to bulge outwards making you into a pear shape
- Keep your mouth slightly open and your jaw relaxed. Breathe normally out. This allows your pelvic floor to remain relaxed
- Pull up your anal muscles as you finish emptying. This will improve the closing reflex and help you to wipe clean

You might find trying to go to the toilet at a regular time, for example after a big meal or a hot drink, helps you to go to the toilet much easier. Make sure you take your time and do not try to rush, as you are then more likely to strain.



Your Physiotherapist is _____

Contact telephone number: 01493 452378

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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Responsive communication

Effective and professional

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

**For a large print version
of this leaflet, contact
PALS 01493 453240**

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