

# PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

## BOWEL CARE FOR ONCOLOGY PATIENTS

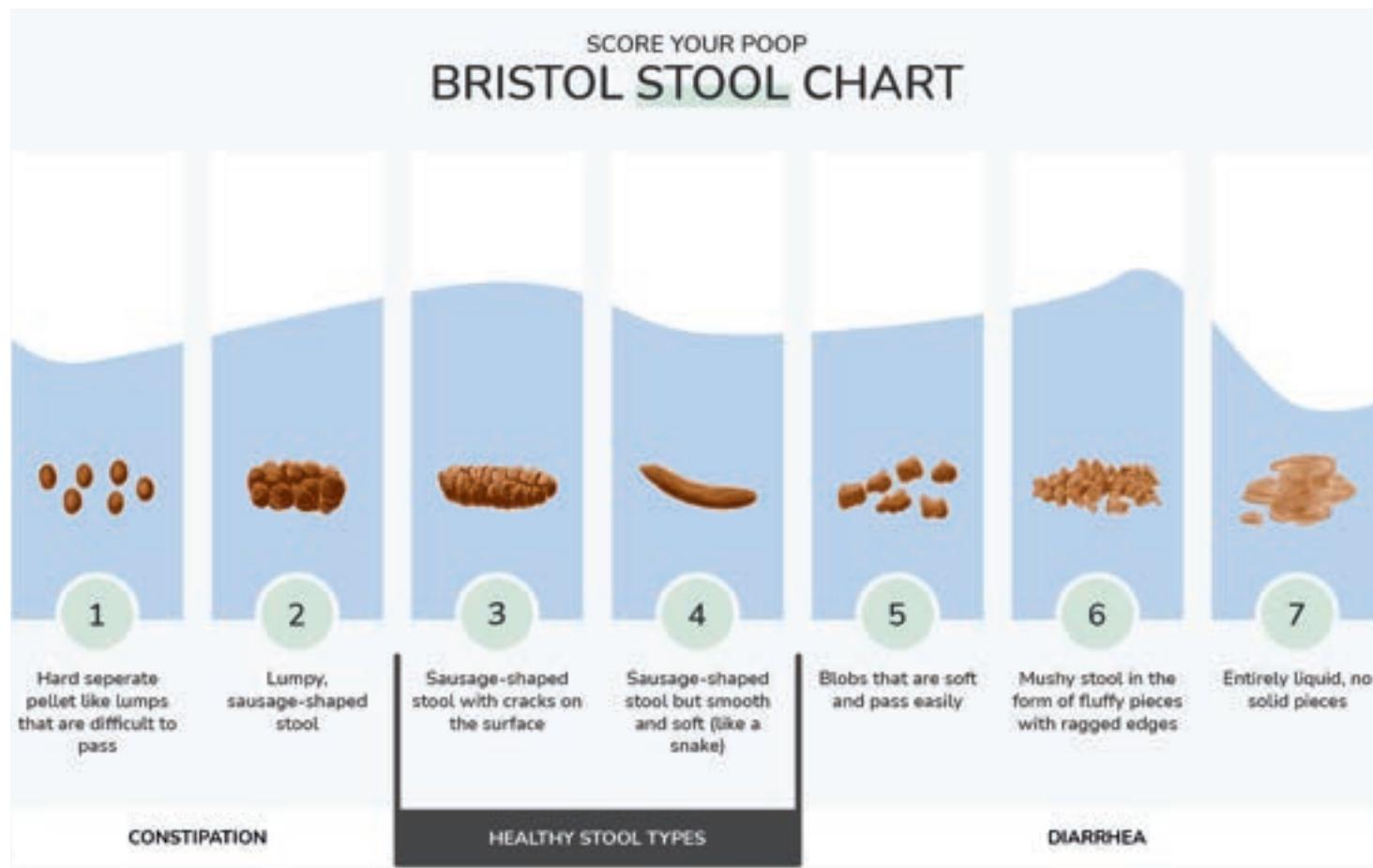
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Constipation and Diarrhoea

## OVERFLOW DIARRHOEA

This sometimes develops in patients who have constipation. The constipated material in your bowel is so hard that you can't push it out. Because of this, the bowel begins to leak out watery stools around the constipated material from much higher up in the bowel. This passes round the blockage and out of your bowel.

The leakage from the bowel causes soiling on your underwear and can appear like diarrhoea. Doctors call this overflow diarrhoea. In this situation you should not take anti diarrhoea medicines. So, if you've had severe constipation and then develop diarrhoea, you must talk to your doctor or nurse before taking anything.



**Type 1** shows constipation. You should increase fibre in your diet; increase your fluids, exercise and laxatives.

**Type 2** shows constipation. You should increase fibre in your diet, increase your fluid intake, exercise, and laxatives

**Type 3** shows an almost ideal bowel motion. You should very slightly increase your fibre, fluid intake and exercise.

**Type 4** shows an ideal bowel motion. You should continue your current diet, exercise and laxatives (if taking laxatives)

**Type 5** Shows a semi-formed bowel motion which may be the start of diarrhoea. You should reduce your laxatives (if taking laxatives)

**Type 6 and 7** show diarrhoea. You should stop taking laxative, (if taking laxatives) and decrease your dietary fibre. **You should contact your oncology unit if you have 4 or more of these motions in 24 hours.**

Constipation and diarrhoea can be very common problems for patients with cancer, for many different reasons. It is very important to manage your bowels well as this can prevent a lot of unpleasant problems.

Occasionally, bowel problems can cause patients to be admitted to hospital between chemotherapy treatments when these problems cannot be managed at home.

This information is to help you manage your bowels at home, and if followed may help avoid an unexpected admission.

If you need advice about laxatives, you can speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Sometimes you may need a prescription for additional medicines for your bowels and this can be arranged, if required.

## BOWEL MOTION RECORD