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Question Time: The Scoop on Poop

Spending the past two weekends on the road, I got asked a lot of questions, and in some cases, I'm asked the same questions several times. This week, I'm selecting the top three questions and answering them for everyone. Let's begin with this question: how many bowel movements per day are normal?

The question came from people who were concerned they're eliminating too many times or not enough. I know some television doctors and websites talk endlessly about bowel movements; not to be indelicate, they talk on and on about frequency, color, floating or not, and more. I am no expert, but I know two facts: people don't like it when their bowel movement patterns change, and what you eat and what you drink can affect bathroom habits significantly.

What's normal is very individualized. For some, it's once or twice a day or more, for others it's once every day or so. It depends on what you eat and how much you eat. When you change your eating pattern, and that can include taking dietary supplements, you can expect some type of change. That's especially true if you start eating more vegetables and fruits because they have more fiber than your gut is used to.



Of course if you're in intense pain because nothing has happened for days, then you need to find a way to move things along. And we've probably all had diarrhea bad enough that we became dehydrated, and that requires some kind of action as well. But between those two extremes, whatever is normal for you is how your body has learned to cope with food, so don't worry about it. There's no good, better, or best. It just is.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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