

my personal

# GUT & BOWEL HEALTH PLAN

## COMMON (BUT NOT NORMAL!) GI/BOWEL SYMPTOMS

- CONSTIPATION
- DIARRHEA
- ABDOMINAL CRAMPS
- NAUSEA
- BLOATING
- EXCESSIVE GAS
- ACID REFLUX
- HEMORRHOIDS/FISSURES

## PELVIC FLOOR SYMPTOMS RELATED TO GI ISSUES

- PELVIC PAIN
- DIFFICULTY STARTING BOWEL MOVEMENT
- LOW BACK PAIN
- URGENT OR FREQUENT DEFECACTION
- PAINFUL BOWEL MOVEMENTS
- ABDOMINAL PAIN
- INCOMPLETE BOWEL EMPTYING
- PELVIC ORGAN PROLAPSE

## MY ACTION PLAN

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List some ideas for how you can improve your gut or bowel health; some great examples are on the list to the right.

## GUT HEALTH IDEAS

Not all of these ideas may apply to you, but they are a starting point! Make sure to consult your doctor and physical therapist before making any changes yourself.

### DIETARY CHANGES

*Ex: Adding more fiber, eating more produce, eating less processed food, eliminating symptoms-causing food, adding supplements such as probiotics.*

### MOVEMENT & EXERCISE

*Ex: Committing to 30 mins daily exercise, doing physical therapy exercises, stretching, going for a walk after eating.*

### STRESS RELIEF

*Ex: Yoga, meditation, deep breathing, mindfulness, hot bath, relaxing music, hobbies, seeing a therapist.*

### PHYSICAL THERAPY

*Ex: Schedule an appointment, work on your home program which could improve things like self-massage, foam rolling, colon massage.*

### OTHER TREATMENT

*Ex: Schedule an appointment with another practitioner (GI doctor, naturopath, acupuncturist, chiropractor)*

### HYDRATION

*Ex: Drink at least 64 oz daily, sip water throughout the day rather than "gulping" a lot of water at one time.*

Tips and tricks for

# HEALTHY BOWEL MOVEMENTS

## EXIT STRATEGY IDEAS

NOT ALL OF THESE IDEAS MAY APPLY TO YOU,  
BUT THEY ARE A STARTING POINT!

### DEEP BREATHING

*Long, slow belly breaths help the pelvic floor and nervous system relax to allow for an unhindered bowel movement.*

### TAKE YOUR TIME

*Relax and don't try to rush it. Let your body eliminate on its own schedule, even if it means sitting longer on the toilet.*

### AVOID STRAINING

*Do not push, strain, or force a bowel movement. If you still cannot complete your bowel movement without straining, try a big, deep inhale to "push" instead. Use the breath to increase pressure inside rather than bearing down.*

### AVOID "HOVERING"

*Sit down! Bring wipes or toilet seat covers if you do not like sitting in public restrooms. "Hovering" makes it very difficult for your pelvic floor to relax fully.*

### GENTLE MASSAGE

*Gently rubbing circles over your sacrum or low back can stimulate the urge to go.*

### POSITIONING

*Relax the pelvic floor by propping feet on a stool (or Squatty Potty!) so that your knees are higher than your hips. Lean forward, resting your arms on your knees to help you relax fully.*



## MAJOR FACTORS



*Pelvic floor muscles must relax in order to allow for a bowel movement (BM)*



*Pushing or straining counteracts pelvic floor relaxation and can cause other symptoms*



*The nervous system won't allow a BM in 'fight or flight' mode, when stress is high*

## MY ACTION PLAN

*List your top 1-3 exit strategies that help you improve your bowel movements. See the column to the left for ideas.*