

Chapter 1 Understanding common bowel changes in older adults

第一章 長者常見的腸道健康問題

1.1 Case study – Story of Ms. Lau

1.1 長者常見的腸道健康問題(一) - 劉女士個案背景

Ms. Lau, 80 years old.

劉女士，80歲

Recently, Ms. Lau's friend called to greet her and wanted to meet her for tea, but she was not in the mood and refused.

最近，朋友致電問候劉女士，想約她飲茶，但她沒有心情，不願外出，敷衍幾句便掛線。

Ms. Lau lives with her daughter, Jane. Jane found Ms. Lau was depressed, loss of appetite, unwilling to go out, and was very resentful in the past few days. Jane tried to talk to her, she found out Ms. Lau had recently experienced abdominal distention with colic pains. When she felt an urge to defecate, she could not pass it out. However, she had some liquid stool passed out when she did not want to. She was very distressed, and felt embarrassed because of the fecal incontinence in her advanced age, so she did not want to tell anyone. However, her abdominal discomfort was getting worse.

劉女士與女兒阿珍同住。阿珍見劉女士悶悶不樂，最近幾日又胃口大減，不願外出，有時又很忤憎。細問之下，原來劉女士最近感到腹脹，有點絞痛，想大便但又排不出，但不想排便時又有滲便的情況，她感到很苦惱，又覺得自己因年紀大出現大便失禁，感到很尷尬，因此不願多提，但腹部又越來越不舒服。

Jane guessed she might have diarrhea, but Ms. Lau was hesitated to see the doctor because of embarrassment. Therefore, she asked Jane to buy antidiarrheal medication for her.

Ms. Lau did not get better after taking the medicine, and her condition was even getting worse. What was the reason?

Have you encountered this problem?

阿珍猜想她可能是腹瀉，但劉女士又怕尷尬不願見醫生，於是叫阿珍買止瀉藥給她服用。

劉女士服藥後並沒有好轉，情況還差了，究竟是甚麼原因呢？

你又曾遇過這些問題嗎？

1.2 10 Myths and misconceptions of bowel habit

1.2 破解長者對排便習慣的十大迷思

1. Do we need to have bowel open everyday?

1. 每天也要排便嗎?

Normal bowel movement frequency varies from person to person, and the important thing is whether you feel comfortable. Generally, bowel movement frequency can range from three times a day to three times a week. A healthy bowel movement will pass smoothly and without pain and straining. The stool is not too hard and lumpy or too loose. Therefore, don't worry too much about having to defecate once a day.

正常的排便頻率因人而異，需要注意的是排便的過程是否舒適暢順。通常，排便頻率可以是每天 3 次到每週 3 次，排便順暢不用過份用力，不會感到疼痛，大便不會太硬結塊或稀爛便屬正常。因此，不用過於擔心要每天排便一次才算正常。

2. Is constipation just a small problem?

2. 便秘只是小問題?

The normal digestive system of the human body digests and absorbs the food that is eaten, and finally excretes the food residue out of the body, which becomes feces. Abnormal bowel movements, including constipation or diarrhea, can indicate bowel or digestive system problems. It may also be a sign of bowel cancer, so do not underestimate the problem of constipation.

人體正常的消化系統，會把吃進的食物消化和吸收，最後把食物渣滓排出體外，即成糞便。不正常的排便，包括便秘或腹瀉，都表示腸臟或消化系統出現問題，亦有可能是腸癌的徵兆，所以不要輕視便秘問題。

3. Is constipation normal as we age?

3. 長者一定會有便秘?

Constipation is a common problem among older adults. The prevalence of constipation increases with age. Peristalsis of the intestine among older adults is usually weakened, hence they are more prone to constipation. Poor diet due to loose teeth, inadequate fluid intake due to fear of frequent urination, limited mobility and insufficient exercise, as well as multiple comorbidities and medications are also common causes of constipation among older adults. As long as you maintain a healthy lifestyle, constipation is preventable.

便秘是長者常見的問題，便秘的發生率隨年齡增長而增加。長者腸道蠕動較慢，因此較易有便秘。因牙齒鬆脫導致不良飲食，怕尿頻而減少飲水，活動能力下降而運動不足，以及多種長期病患及藥物都是令長者較容易便秘的原因。只要養成良好的生活習慣，便秘是可以預防的。

4. Why do I still have constipation despite eating a lot of green vegetables?

4. 為什麼我吃了許多蔬菜，仍然便秘？

Many people think that eating more high-fiber vegetables and fruits can promote intestinal peristalsis and help bowel movement. However, if you eat too many fruits and vegetables without drinking adequate water, it will make the constipation worse!

Dietary fibre increases faecal volume and stimulates peristalsis. It swells, absorbs water and lubricates the intestine to soften faeces and make defecation easier.

If fluid intake is insufficient, fiber cannot absorb water and expand, causing the stool harder and constipation resulted. While eating more fruits and vegetables, you must drink enough water to make your bowel movement smooth.

很多人以為多吃高纖蔬菜、水果可以促進腸道蠕動及幫助排便，但事實上如果吃太多蔬果、又沒喝足夠水，反而會使便秘問題更嚴重！膳食纖維會增加糞便量並刺激蠕動。它會膨脹，吸收水分並潤滑腸道，從而軟化糞便，使排便更容易。如果水分攝取不足，會讓纖維質無法吸水膨脹，導致糞便變硬，造成便秘。因此，多吃蔬果的同時，必須攝取足夠水分，才能使排便暢順。

5. Should older adults drink less water to avoid frequent toileting?

5. 長者應該減少飲水以避免頻繁上廁所嗎？

Maintaining an adequate level of hydration is important for proper function of the whole human body. Inadequate fluid intake is very common among older adults.

With aging, thirst sensation is disturbed and they deliberately limit fluids to avoid frequent toileting. Too little fluid intake can lead to dehydration, constipation, and poor digestion. If severely dehydrated, it may cause hypernatremia, affect heart rate, and even coma. Adults generally drink 8 glasses of water a day, which is two liters. However, older adults usually have reduced renal function and poor circulation, too much water intake will cause edema. In such case, older adults should drink 6 glasses of water each day, about 1500-1600 ml.

維持身體足夠的水份對身體機能是很重要的。長者飲水不足情況很普遍，由於長者的口腔感覺較弱，未必感到口渴，亦有部分長者因避免經常上廁所而刻意減少飲水量。攝取太少水分可引致脫水、便秘、消化能力轉差；如嚴重脫水，或會引致高鈉症，影響心跳，甚至昏迷。成人一般每天要喝 8 杯水，即兩公升，但由於長者的腎功能較弱，循環機能亦較差，過多水分會引致水腫，在這種情況下長者每天應飲用 6 杯水，約 1500-1600 毫升。

6. Is zero-fat diet good to health?

6. 零油脂餐單對健康好嗎？

Excessive consumption of fat can lead to serious health problems such as obesity, cardiac and vascular diseases. However, adequate fat plays an important role in providing us with energy and maintain body temperature. It protects our body's internal organs and ensures the proper functioning of our nervous system and skin. It produces hormones and helps our body absorb fat-soluble vitamins like vitamin A, D, E, and K. Therefore, eliminating all fat will ultimately lead to major health implications. In addition, fat plays a role in stimulating motility in the intestine, which promotes bowel movements. Extremely low fat diet can cause constipation. The idea was to reduce saturated fats, not eliminate all fats from the diet.

食用過多脂肪會導致嚴重的健康問題，例如肥胖、心臟及血管問題。但適量的脂肪就像燃料，為我們的身體提供熱能，維持體溫。它可保護內臟器官及維持神經系統及皮膚的正常運作。它會製造賀爾蒙及幫助身體吸收脂溶性維生素，例如維生素 A、D、E 和 K。因此，完全不攝取脂肪會對健康造成重大影響。此外，脂肪可刺激腸道的活動，有助排便。如飲食中攝取極少脂肪可能會導致便秘。記著，我們是要從飲食中減少攝取飽和脂肪，而不是完全不攝取脂肪。

7. Fruits contain too much sugar, older adults should eat less?

7. 水果含太高糖分，長者應少吃?

Older adults should eat 2-3 servings of fruits a day, which not only promotes good health but also helps defecation and prevent diseases. Don't mistakenly think that the sweetness of fruit will affect the blood sugar level. The glycemic index (GI) of the fruit should be used as a measure. For diabetes patients, it is recommended to choose fruits with low GI, such as apples, bananas, kiwis, oranges, dragon fruits. Should pay attention to avoid excessive consumption of high GI fruits such as watermelon, mango, lychee, longan, and durian. Not to replace fruit with fruit juice, a cup of freshly squeezed fruit juice without added sugar is equal to or more than 2 servings of fruit, and the dietary fiber content is low. Fresh fruit is smart choice!

長者應每天進食兩至三份水果，這樣不但能促進身體健康，並能有助排便及預防疾病。不要誤以為水果甜度會影響血糖升降，應以水果的升糖指數（GI）高低作為衡量指標，如為糖尿病患者，建議挑選低升糖指數的水果，例如蘋果、香蕉、奇異果、橙、火龍果，注意避免進食過量屬於高升糖指數的水果如西瓜、芒果、荔枝、龍眼、榴槤。不要以果汁代替水果，一杯無添加糖的鮮榨果汁已等於甚至超過兩份水果的份量，且膳食纖維含量較少，故選擇新鮮水果為佳！

8. Is prune juice useful for constipation?

8. 西梅汁對便秘有用嗎?

Prunes and prunes juice contain insoluble dietary fiber and sorbitol, which is a natural laxative. Sorbitol works as a laxative which drawing water into the large intestine and stimulating bowel movement. However, you need to pay attention to the amount of consumption. It is recommended to eat 2-3 prunes each time, or drink half a cup of about 125ml prunes juice to avoid gastrointestinal problems such as gastrointestinal pain or acute diarrhea.

西梅和西梅汁均含有非水溶性膳食纖維及山梨糖醇 (sorbitol)，是一種天然輕瀉劑。山梨糖醇能把水分帶入大腸，刺激腸道蠕動，造成輕瀉作用。但需要注意食用量，建議每次進食 2-3 粒西梅，或飲用半杯約 125 毫升的西梅汁，以避免引起腸胃痛或急性腹瀉等腸胃問題。

9. Can probiotics help to improve constipation?

9. 益生菌能幫助改善便秘嗎？

Probiotics are bacteria that are beneficial to the human body. They mainly exist in our intestines to help digest and absorb nutrients. They also help to improve intestinal peristalsis and constipation. Studies claimed that probiotics can help to improve immunity and reduce harmful bacteria in the intestines. However, some studies revealed that probiotics have mild effect in solving the problem of constipation. Regarding the role of probiotics, the route of intake and dosage still need more clinical research to empirically support.

益生菌是對人體有益的細菌，主要存在我們的腸道中，有助消化和吸收營養，亦有助改善胃腸蠕動及便秘。有研究指出益生菌有助提升腸道免疫力，減少有害細菌在腸道中擴散的可能性，以及治療腸胃問題，如便秘、偶發性肚瀉等問題。但亦部份研究指出益生菌對於幫助解決便秘問題的作用不大。有關益生菌的作用、服用方法及份量仍需要更多臨床研究去實證支持。

10. Is laxative the most effective way to treat constipation?

10. 最有效解決便秘就是用瀉藥或通便劑？

Using laxatives to solve the problem of constipation is only a stopgap measure. To have a more comfortable bowel movement, the most important thing is to develop healthy lifestyle. It is recommended to eat more high-fiber foods, eat 3-4 servings (6-8 tael) or more of vegetables, eat 2-3 servings of fruits, drink 6-8 glasses of water each day, and have appropriate exercise to assist intestinal peristalsis. Try to develop the habit of regular bowel movements and go to the toilet within 15-30 minutes after a meal. The above actions can help to solve the root cause of constipation.

使用瀉藥或通便劑以解決便秘問題，只是權宜之計，要令排便暢通自如，最重要是養成健康生活習慣。建議應多吃高纖維的食物，每天要吃 3-4 份(6-8 兩)或以上蔬菜、兩至三份水果，每天飲 6-8 杯水，亦要配合適量的運動以協助腸臟蠕動，同時養成定時排便的習慣，在飯後的 15-30 分鐘內上廁所，這樣才能幫助解決引致便秘的根本原因。

1.3 What should the stool look like?

1.3 大便應該是怎樣的?

Do you get used to looking back at your stool every time after you go to the toilet?

The shape of stool is related to the time it stays in the colon, so it can be used to determine the time it takes for food to pass through the colon.

Regarding whether the stool pattern is normal or not, there are actually international standards. The Bristol Stool Scale, developed in 1997, divides faeces into seven types.

每次上完廁所，你會習慣回頭看看你的大便嗎?

大便的形狀和其留在大腸的時間有關，所以可以用來判斷食物經過大腸所需的時間。關於大便型態正常與否，其實是有國際標準的。1997年發表的布里斯托大便分類法（Bristol Stool Scale），將糞便分為七類。

Type 1 is separate hard lumps, like nuts.

Type 2 is sausage-shaped but lumpy.

Type 1 and 2 indicate constipation.

Faeces peristalizes too slowly in the colon and stay too long. When too much water in the feces is absorbed by the colon, it will become dry and hard, not easy to come out, and lead to constipation.

第一類是呈分開的硬粒狀，像一粒粒果仁。

第二類是呈香腸狀，但表面凹凸不平。

第一及第二類都是屬於便秘的糞便。

糞便在結腸內蠕動太緩慢而停留過久，當糞便中過多水分被結腸吸走，糞便會變得乾硬，不易排出，因而形成便秘。

Type 3 is like a sausage but with cracks on its surface.

Type 4 is like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft.

Type 3 and 4 are ideal stools as they are easier to pass.

第三類是呈香腸狀，但表面有裂紋。

第四類是呈香腸或蛇的形象，表面平滑柔軟。

第三及第四類都是較容易排出糞便的理想形態。

Type 5 is soft blobs with clear-cut edges.


Type 6 is fluffy piece with ragged edges, a mushy stool.

Type 5 and 6 indicate diarrhea.

第五類是邊界清晰的柔軟塊狀。

第六類是鬆散而沒有明顯邊界的糊狀大便。

第五及第六類都是表示腹瀉。

	File	Handout - Bowel changes in older adults – Chapter 1
	Copyright	© 2021 Jockey Club CADENZA e-Tools for Elder Care. All Rights Reserved.
	Page	7

Finally, type 7 is watery, no solid pieces, entirely liquid.

It indicates severe diarrhea.

而最後第七類是水狀，無固體塊，屬嚴重腹瀉。








If your stool is soft and easy to pass, like type 3 or type 4, it seems that your bowel movement is healthy. If not, it may reflect your bowel problem, and you should pay attention to your health.

如果您的大便柔軟且容易排出，就好似第 3 類或第 4 類，表示您的腸道健康。否則，可能反映您有腸道問題，應注意健康。

Next time, after going to the toilet, you may look back to check your stool shape!

下次去完廁所後，大家都可以回頭看看自己的大便形狀喇！

Box 1: Bristol Stool Chart ^{3,4}

Type 1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)	Indicate constipation
Type 2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy	
Type 3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface	Ideal forms of faeces that are easier to pass
Type 4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft	
Type 5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges	Indicate diarrhoea
Type 6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool	
Type 7		Watery, no solid pieces	

Adapted from Heaton and Lewis, 1997.

(Centre for Health Protection, 2014)

圖一：布里斯托大便分類圖 ^{3,4}

第一類		呈分開的硬粒狀，像果仁（排出時很困難）	表示便秘
第二類		呈香腸狀，但表面凹凸不平	
第三類		呈香腸狀，但表面有裂紋	較容易排出糞便的理想形態
第四類		呈香腸或蛇的形象，表面平滑柔軟	
第五類		邊界清晰的柔軟塊狀	表示腹瀉
第六類		鬆散而沒有明顯邊界的糊狀大便	
第七類		水狀，無固體塊	

改編自 Heaton and Lewis，一九九七年。

(衛生防護中心，2014)

1.4 Case study – Common bowel problems among older adults in HK

1.4 長者常見的腸道健康問題(二)- 劉女士之腸道問題

Jane was worried and took Ms. Lau to see the doctor.

阿珍最後不放心，帶了劉女士見醫生。

The doctor asked about the bowel habits of Ms. Lau.

Ms. Lau described her bowel movements as infrequent, about 1 to 2 times per week, with hard lumpy stools and some straining. She denied having any nausea, vomiting, blood in the stool, rectal bleeding, fever and weight loss.

醫生問及劉女士平時的大便習慣。

劉女士描述她每星期約有 1-2 次大便，大便是硬粒狀，要用力才能排便。她沒有噁心、嘔吐、血便、出血、發燒及體重減輕。

After examination, it was found that Ms. Lau was not suffering from diarrhea, but severe constipation and led to watery stools leak out. In addition, the doctor also found that Ms. Lau had hemorrhoids.

醫生檢查後，發現劉女士並非腹瀉，而是因嚴重便秘造成滲便。另外，醫生亦發現了劉女士有痔瘡問題。

Finally, the doctor prescribed a laxative to Ms. Lau for temporary use. She had a bowel movement after taking it. Abdominal discomfort subsided and no watery stools leak out.

最後，醫生處方了通便藥讓劉女士暫時性服用，劉女士服用後便排便，沒有腹痛，亦沒有滲便情況。

Defecation is a very personal matter. Bowel problems are common among the older adults, especially those frail older adults who have constipation, diarrhea or fecal incontinence etc. In addition to causing physical discomfort, they also lose their dignity and affect their quality of life.

排便是非常私人的事情。腸道問題在長者中很常見，尤其是體弱的長者，他們可能有便秘、腹瀉或大便失禁等問題，除了會導致身體不適外，亦會令他們失去尊嚴及影響生活質素。

Constipation is a common bowel complaint in Hong Kong, with reported prevalence of 14.3% among community-dwelling adults. Constipation is highly prevalent in older adults.

在香港，便秘是很常見的問題，於社區居住的成年人的便秘患病率為 14.3%。

According to the Report of Population Health Survey 2004 conducted by the Department of Health, the prevalence among individuals 65 years of age or older in the community was 17.2%. The ratio is almost twice higher than other age groups.

而長者患有便秘問題更為普遍，根據衛生署在 2004 年的人口健康調查，65 歲或以上的長者當中，有 17.2% 有便秘問題，比其他年齡層的比率高出差不多一倍。

Lower socioeconomic class, regular medication use, female sex, and symptoms of anxiety and depression have all been associated with increased prevalence of constipation among older adults.

較低的社會經濟階層、長期服藥、女性以及焦慮和抑鬱的症狀都與長者便秘的患病率增加有關。

Although taking laxatives relieve constipation, long-term use can cause bowel dependence.

To effectively prevent constipation, it is important to modify lifestyles in the long run.


雖然服用通便藥可有助排便，但長期服用會做成依賴。要有效預防便秘，長遠來說，養成良好生活習慣是很重要的。

Reference

Please refer to our website - <https://www.cadenza.hk/e-tools/en/pro/bowel/>

-End of Chapter 1-

-第一章 完結-

 The logo for Jockey Club Cadenza e-Tools for Elder Care. It features the text 'Jockey Club' at the top, 'Cadenza' in a large stylized font, 'e-Tools' in a smaller font, and 'for Elder Care' below it. At the bottom, there is a Chinese slogan: '賽馬會流金館 護老有道'.	File	Handout - Bowel changes in older adults – Chapter 1
	Copyright	© 2021 Jockey Club CADENZA e-Tools for Elder Care. All Rights Reserved.
	Page	11