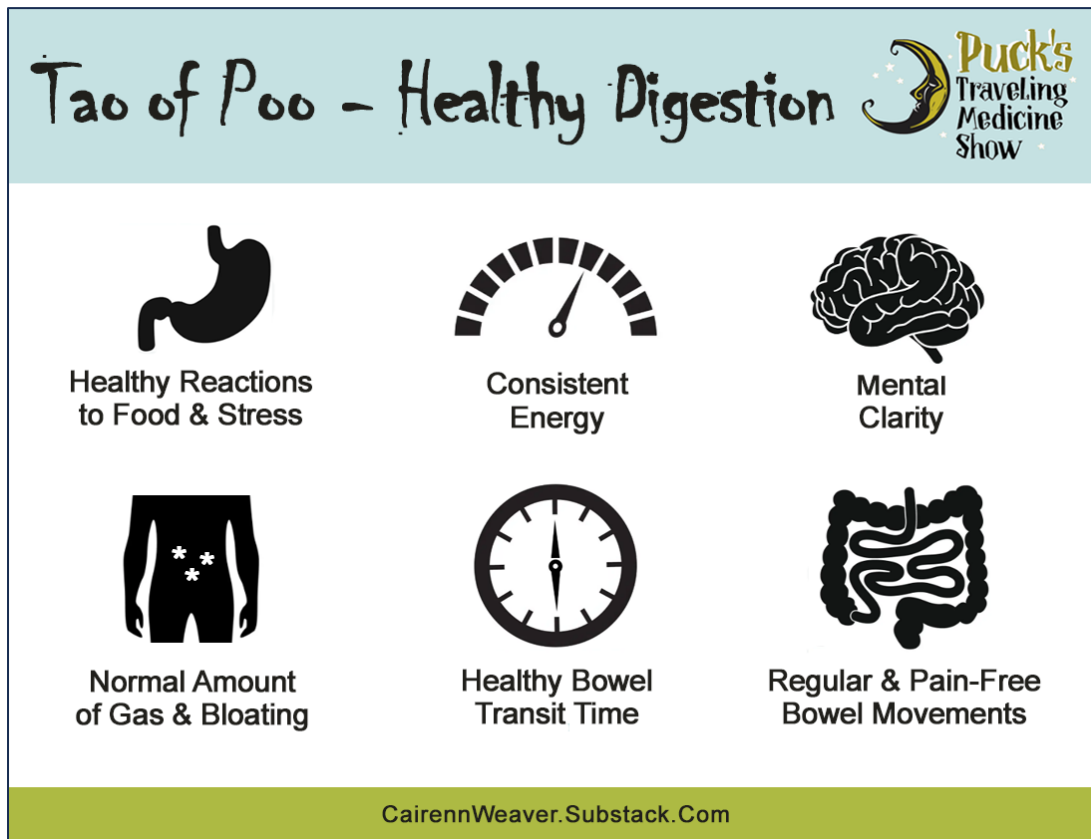


Tao of Poo Self Assessment Quick Start



So, how's everything working? Healthy Digestive Signs:

- Healthy reactions to food and stress.
- Consistent energy.
- Mental clarity.
- Normal amount of gas and bloating.
- Healthy bowel transit time.
- Regular and pain-free bowel movements.



Healthy Reactions to Stress: Many neurological and mood disorders often have enteric (intestines) manifestations. The gut and brain are connected through the gut-brain axis, a bidirectional communication network that can influence mood, cognition, and mental health.

Consistent Energy: Although lack of sleep and stress can impact your energy level, in relationship to digestion there are several pathways involved. If your energy flow is consistent throughout the day and you are sleeping well, it indicates your digestion is serving you well. *These pathways include:*

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Blood Sugar: Eating causes blood sugar to rise, and insulin then moves sugar into your cells for energy. However, if you don't have enough insulin or your blood sugar rises too much, it can make you feel tired.

Blood Flow: When you eat, your body sends more blood to your digestive system to help you digest food. This means there's less blood going to your brain, which can make you feel sleepy until digestion is complete.

Food Type: Certain foods can make you feel more tired than others. For example, meals high in protein, simple carbohydrates, or saturated fat, or foods that contain melatonin, can make you feel sleepy (foods such as milk, nuts, cherries, fish, rice, goji berries, and oats contain melatonin.)

Mental Clarity: Gut health is closely tied to your ability to concentrate and stay mentally alert. Similar to the stress reaction, the gut contains the enteric nervous system (ENS), which controls digestion and communicates with the brain through the nervous system and hormones. The gut microbiota also produces and interacts with neurotransmitters that can affect mood, cognition, and behavior.

Normal Amount of Gas and Bloating: Meaning, if you are eating for health, and not stacking fast digesting foods on top of slow digesting foods, and your gut microbiota is balanced then you will not experience gas and bloating. I know this flies in the face of the many posts that say some gas and bloating is normal. I want to emphasize that what is common, or normal, may not mean healthy. Plant-based foods, including nuts and seeds do not cause digestive problems if they are not over-consumed. If plant-based proteins are prepared correctly by soaking, or sprouting, they do not cause digestive problems either – however, the majority of the time this is not the case, especially when eating away from home. The gas that is created inside the digestive tract is from fermentation, which is alcohol that is disruptive and destructive to tissues.

Healthy Bowel Transit Time: Bowel transit time refers to the amount of time it takes for food to move from the mouth to the end of the digestive tract. Transit time is how long it takes from the time you ingest your food to elimination. The ideal transit time is between 21 and 24 hours. Use corn kernels or beetroot (you'll be able to see the corn in your stool and beetroot will make your stools red/purple) and time how long it takes from when you eat it to when you notice it in your stools. If it's more than 24 hours, you have slow transit time and there is likely to be some level of constipation.

Regular and Pain-Free Bowel Movements: Everyone is different, but if you are having at least one bowel movement per day, then your gut is functioning. Ideally, one bowel movement per meal means everything is humming along fine – all systems go! Otherwise, there could be underlying digestive imbalances, microbiome imbalances, food intolerances or sensitivities involved—the number of factors is a long list and depends a great deal on diet, hydration level, lifestyle and history.

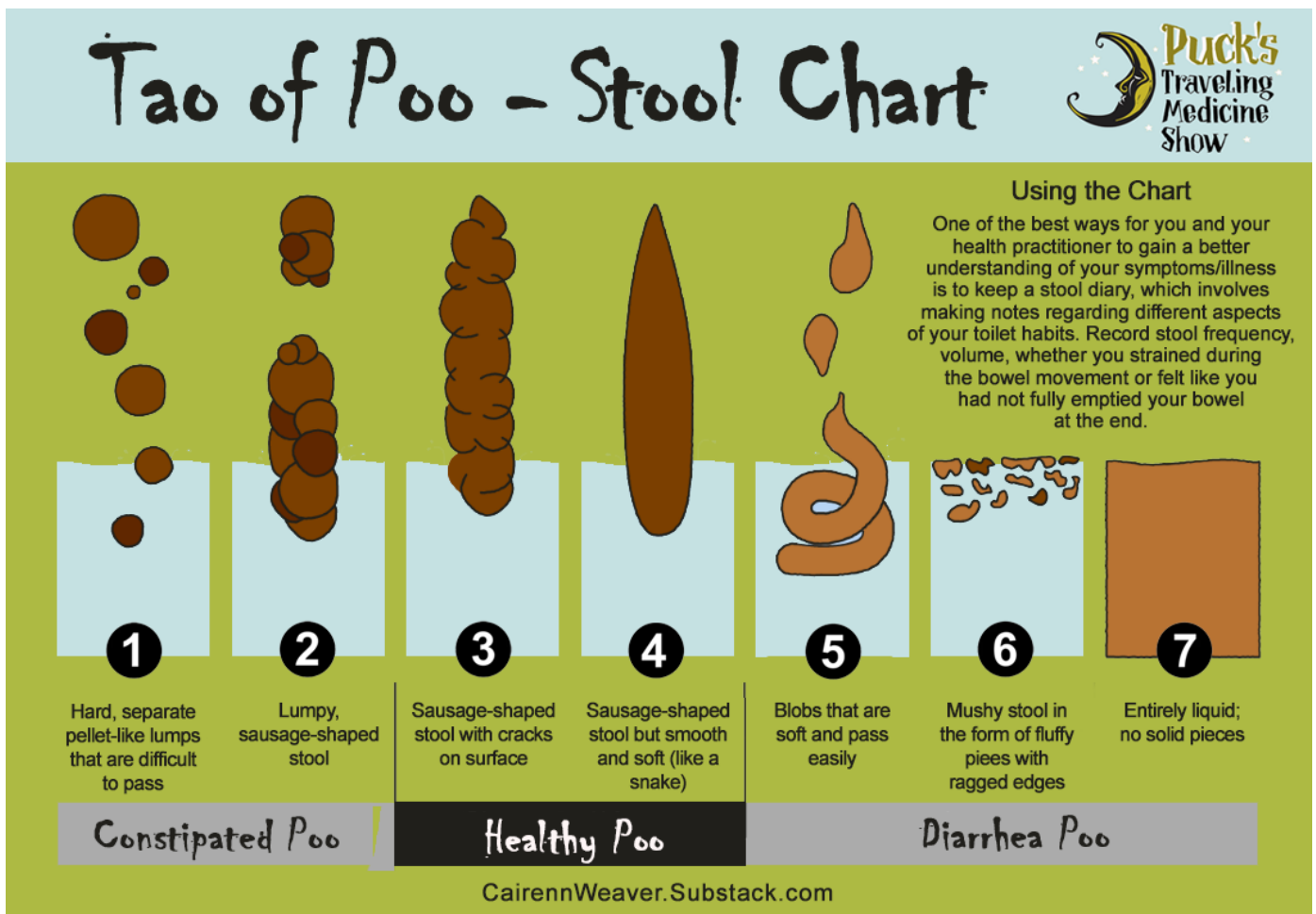
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Stool Chart:

Self-assessment of poo includes three observations: Formation, Color, and Buoyancy. However, a fourth and important observation is frequency.

The following chart is the Bristol Stool Chart, which categories poo (or stool) into seven categories based on appearance.



Who's Who of Poo:

Dr. Ken Heaton and Dr. Stephen Lewis, along with 66 others, developed the Bristol Stool Chart (also known as the Meyer's scale), in 1997 at the University of Bristol.

Aren't we fortunate that there are people in the world willing to do the dirty work for us?

Tao of Poo Self Assessment Quick Start



Bristol Chart Explanation Continued ...

Formation:

Consistency: Type 3-4 stools on the Bristol chart are the goal!

Little balls, hard stools, or lots of cracks (1-2): These indicate constipation. It's very likely you are lacking fiber in your diet, and you may not be adequately hydrated. Increasing the number of fruits and veggies you eat, moving physically, and consuming enough fluids are crucial first steps if these types of stools are common for you.

Soft stools (5-6): Can indicate problems including malabsorption. Some common offenders of malabsorption include dairy, sweeteners, gluten, infection, food sensitivities, or some other, more complex, digestion issue.

Diarrhea (7): Can be caused by infections, more extensive malabsorption and food sensitivities to name a few. Sometimes diarrhea is actually constipation.

Honestly, when I started researching I was amazed at how many articles there are about toileting paper and wiping. The following comments came from Healthline with a host of complaint I didn't want to touch, no pun intended.

“If you feel like you have to use half the roll of toilet paper after you have a bowel movement, chances are you may have an underlying health condition. Ideally, wiping after a bowel movement should take just two to three swipes of toilet paper. (There should be very little to no residue.)”

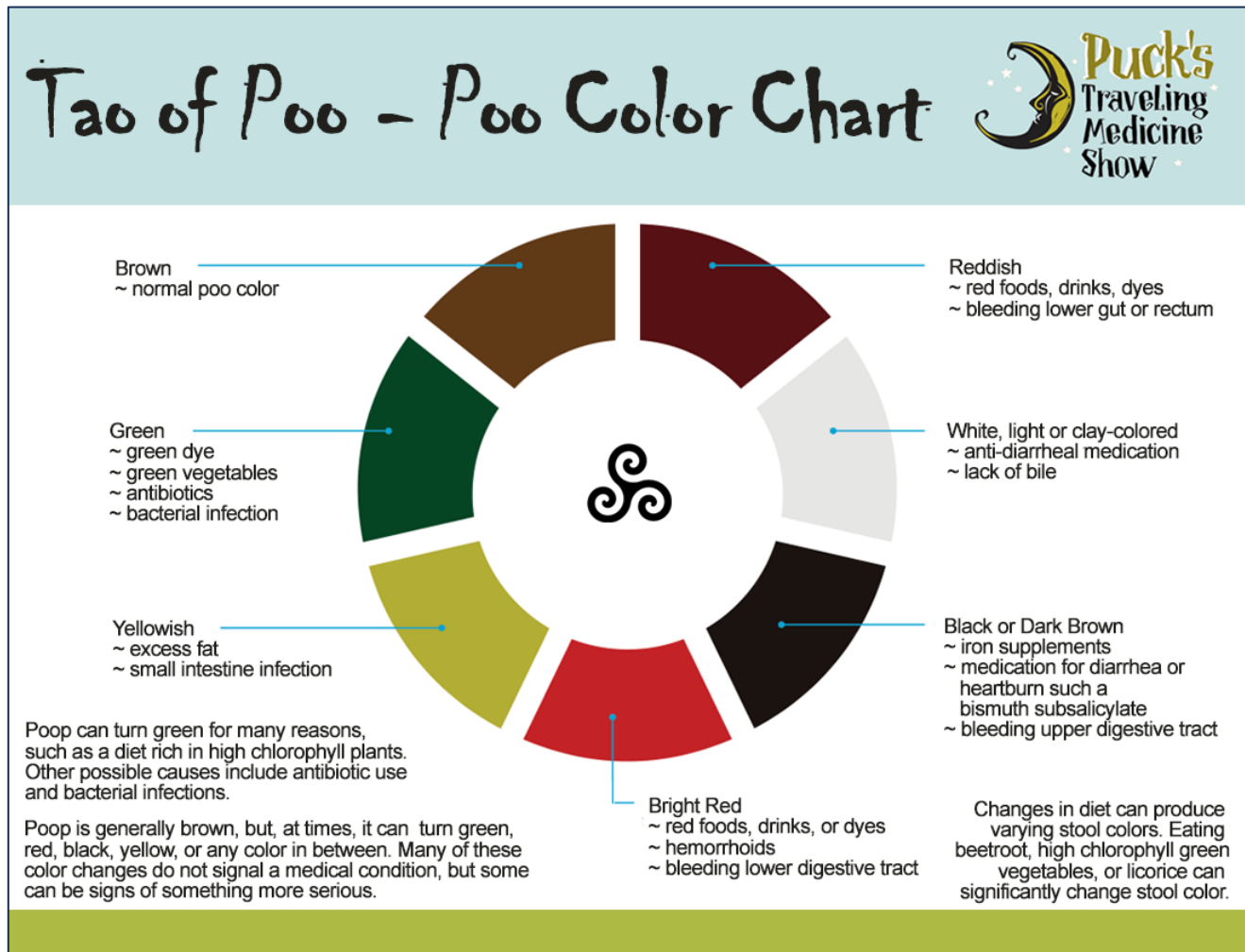
Poo Posture: By sitting on the toilet in the correct way it can help the pelvic floor muscles to relax and the rectum opens up to a funnel shape rather than a tight bend. Do not 'hover' over the toilet, always make sure you sit down properly and use a footstool under your feet. If you have frequent difficulty, you may have noticed (if you go hiking or camping) that you have less difficulty when you squat to poo in the woods. Nature also reduces stress.



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Color Chart: In addition to the Bristol chart, the color of your poo is incredibly telling.



Brown Poo. Considered normal and nothing to worry about.

Black Poo: Stool that is unusually dark in color may potentially be an indication of a digestive issue. While it could mean something as simple as taking iron supplements or charcoal, black stools may also signal the presence of gastrointestinal bleeding from your stomach or esophagus. Pay attention to this potential warning sign and contact your practitioner if you observe darker than usual stools for over 24 hours.

Red Poo: Before you get alarmed, if you have consumed any red beets recently, then there is probably nothing to worry about – they are renowned for their color and are frequently used as natural dyes. However, if that's not the case, a red stool may indicate a serious condition, such as colon cancer, fissures, hemorrhoids, irritable bowel disease, or ulcerative colitis.

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Color Chart Continued ...

White/Gray Poo: Pale poo can look white, gray or like the color of clay. This color is present when the liver doesn't release enough bile salts into the stool in your intestines. This may occur due to bile duct blockages, gallstones or liver problems. A pale gray stool is usually a sign of a more serious problem.

Yellow Poo: Yellow poo can also be a sign of many diseases typically occurring from too much fat in the stools. This can be due to a variety of reasons from celiac disease, to liver and pancreatic insufficiencies, to a giardia infection (aka beaver fever). If your stools move too fast through your digestive tract the process which turns them brown will not have enough time to happen which can also lead to yellow stools. This can sometimes be seen in cases of stress and anxiety (which diverts energy from digestion to stress the sympathetic nervous system.) In the worst-case scenarios, especially if there are other symptoms present, such as severe belly pain and feeling worse after a meal, nausea, vomiting, rapid heart rate, fever, swelling or feeling sore or tender, fluid buildup in your belly, lowered blood pressure, or yellowing of the skin and eyes (jaundice), then seek assistance from a practitioner.

Green Poo: The most common cause of green poo is food related – eating lots of kale, spinach or other leafy greens. As long as your food is digesting, there's no problem and in fact, congratulation for making healthy choices. If your stool is green and you don't think it's from green veggies, then consult a practitioner as it may be due to similar conditions that cause yellow or pale stools.

Buoyancy: Basically, your stools should sink! While an occasional floating stool is likely nothing to worry about, if the occurrence becomes frequent it may be a sign of something more serious – specifically chronic pancreatic insufficiency. In this case, insufficient enzymes are being produced by the pancreas which interferes with its ability to properly break down fat in your body – fat floats.

Frequency: When it comes to how often you have bowel movement, information varies widely.

According to many healthcare providers, a healthy frequency of bowel movements is between three times a day and three times a week. A gastroenterologist at Henry Ford Health says that regular is typically anything from three bowel movements a day to one every three days. I strongly disagree, seriously, because many of the health statistics are aggregated from people who may be normal, but are not healthy. So, there is common, and then there's ideal.

In holistic health, one movement per meal per day is considered healthy, provided that they live up to the worthy Bristol Chart. You should have at minimum of one movement per day, and better still 2-3 daily. Less than that, and you may have problems brewing in your plumbing-- this will ultimately not lead you to a long and harmonious life, which after all is the “Tao” part of our thesis. Longevity is more than the number of years you live, it is the quality of those years, and being energetic enough to work on that bucket list and fulfill your dreams. Poor elimination reduces nutrient absorption, and that is the purpose of eating in the first place – to nourish your body.