

THE DIGITAL EXAMINER



Number 120—September, 2009

Address changes, comments
or suggestions should be
directed to: bobshiell@shaw.ca
403.253.1911



More Prostaid information at www.prostaid.org

120 Issues—Ten Years!

It is hard for me to believe but ten years have passed since the first version of this newsletter, (back then it was called "The Pathfinder"), was sent to about 125 members. Our mailing list now is fast approaching one thousand printed copies. We mail copies across Canada, into the United States, Europe and Australia. I'm sure that thousands more read it on line around the world.

Not only has the name changed to "The Digital Examiner" but our support group has expanded and matured. We now hold three meetings per month. Our regular general meeting on the second Tuesday of every month at Foothills Hospital and now our fourth Tuesday peer meetings for women at South Calgary Health Centre and our concurrent peer meeting for men.

Thanks to the dedication and work of the Directors of Prostaid, we are a well respected source of information about prostate cancer, locally, nationally and internationally.

Over the years we have been fortunate to have presentations by many leading medical professionals. The fact that they give freely of their time is an indication of the respect they have for our group, and our members.

We have a lot to be proud of: our monthly meetings, our newsletter, our website, the video records of our meeting presentations, our outreach activities in malls, office towers, health fairs and businesses and our multi-media awareness campaigns like Staying Alive.

We are fortunate to have the financial support of many Calgary businesses and individual donations both small and large. We truly could not accomplish the things we have done and have planned for the future without this support.

Soon you will be hearing about our plans for the next decade and beyond. We are committed to helping support men and their families on their journey, to building awareness about this disease and the need for early detection and to advocating for more research spending.

We know that we cannot win the battle alone. We need the support of our members and we need to help move the prostate cancer agenda forward nationally. It is through our affiliation with the Prostate Cancer Canada Network (PCCN), formerly the Canadian Prostate Cancer Network (CPCN) that this will happen.

With your continued support we can look forward to a day when prostate cancer will be a distant memory. Thanks to all readers for their support, both financially and emotionally over the years. Together we can move forward from strength to strength.

Stay tuned for more exciting news as your prostate cancer support group moves into the next decade.

Bob Shiell, President

Prostaid Calgary Society (Prostate Aid)

Prostaid Calgary's
next
monthly meeting
will be held at

7:30 PM on
Tuesday

September 8th
2009

In the auditorium
at
Foothills Hospital

Dr. Siraj Husain
will inform us of
the latest develop-
ments in the
brachytherapy
program at Tom
Baker.

Our next regular
meeting of
"Women And Pros-
tate Cancer"
(WAPC) will be at
7:30PM, on
Tuesday Septem-
ber 22 in room
1001, South Cal-
gary
Health Centre.

A peer meeting for
men will be held at
the same time in
room 1014 at
South Calgary
Health Centre.
at 31 Sunpark
Plaza South East.

The Scoop on Poop

WebMD helps you answer the most common and sometimes sensitive questions about bowel movements.

Reviewed by Louise Chang, MD

We have a lot of silly names for it: BMs, caca, doo-doo, turds, and of course, poop.



We don't generally discuss it in our daily conversations.

But asking some important questions about your bowel movements might give you some insight into your gastrointestinal health. Here's the scoop on poop.

ABCs of Poop

Bowel movements are the end result of your body taking the nutrients it needs from the food you eat and eliminating what's left.

"Bowel movements are important for your health because they are the body's natural way of excreting waste from the body," says Eric Esrailian, MD, section head in general gastroenterology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

When it comes to frequency, color, shape, and size, a general rule of thumb is that normal bowel movements are defined as what's comfortable for you. But being knowledgeable about your digestive process can help you identify when normal goes awry.

Frequency: "There is no normal when it comes to frequency of bowel movements, only averages" says Bernard Aserkoff, MD, a physician in the GI Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

It's average to go once or twice a day, he says, but many people go more, and some go less -- maybe every other day, and or as infrequently as once or twice a week. As long as you feel comfortable, you don't need to give your BMs much thought.

Color: "Bowel movements are generally brown in color because of bile, which is produced in the liver and important to the digestion process," Aserkoff tells WebMD.

The food you eat typically takes three days from the time you eat it until it finishes its journey in your toilet, Aserkoff says. If it takes a shorter time, the result may be greener stool because green is one of the first colors in the rainbow of the digestive process.

Color can be a red flag when it's a drastic change, Aserkoff says.

"If stool is black, it can mean that you are bleeding internally, possibly as a result of an ulcer or cancer," he says.

Stool that is light in color -- like grey clay -- can also mean trouble if it's a change from what you normally see. Although it doesn't happen often, very light-colored stool can be reflective of liver disease.

Size and shape: "We used to believe that size was indicative of a problem if the stool was 'pencil-thin,'" Aserkoff says. "But recent research indicates that this is actually not true."

Size and shape are irrelevant, Aserkoff says, if what's coming out is normal for you.

Odor: Bowel movements usually smell. But is it normal if your trips to the bathroom mean that the rest of the family has to avoid that part of the house for an hour or two?

The answer is yes. It's normal, and probably a good sign that your gut is abundant with bacteria that is working hard to keep you healthy.

Your intestines are swarming with trillions upon trillions of bacteria that enhance digestive and metabolic processes. They are also the reason why poop smells -- a direct result of the bacterial activity in your GI tract. So although it's no bed of roses, it is normal for your bowel movements to stink.

Poop Problems

So what happens when your poop process gets out of whack? The first sign that your intestines aren't up to par is a shift from your normal GI routine, and as a result, discomfort below the waist.

Constipation and Diarrhea

Constipation is a concern when you normally have a bowel movement once or twice a day, and that changes -- maybe you haven't gone in three days, or more. However long it's been, you now feel gassy,

bloated, and generally uncomfortable. When you try to go, you have to push and strain, and what comes out is a whole lot of nothin'.

Constipation can have many causes. It might be that you've had a shift in your diet, such as a drop in fiber intake, or maybe because you're not drinking enough water each day, or because your physical activity level has decreased, slowing your metabolic processes down, including digestion. Certain medications (such as narcotic pain medicines and iron supplements) can also cause constipation problems.

Although constipation causes one set of problems, diarrhea can also mean digestive disaster. Whether it's caused by a meal that just didn't sit right, or a harmful bacterium or virus, it's categorized by loose stool, and another hallmark of GI trouble -- discomfort.

"Diarrhea can be caused by any number of factors," Aserkoff says. "But the problem with diarrhea, in addition to the obvious, is that it can cause other health problems, like dehydration, if you're living with it for more than two or three days."

Generally, you recoup from a bout of diarrhea or constipation in a day or two, Aserkoff says. If not, it's probably worth a trip to the doctor for further GI troubleshooting.

Blood in the Stool

"One of the most significant warning signs when it comes to bowel movements is blood in the stool," Esrailian says.

Blood in your stool could be a symptom of something as significant as cancer and warrants a call to your doctor right away -- even if you think it could be hemorrhoids, or tiny tears in the anal tissue, as a result of constipation and straining, he says. If you're over 50, or if you have a family history of colorectal cancer, a colonoscopy is probably in order.

Other warning signs to watch for when your bowel movements have taken a turn for the worse are fever, abdominal pain, or dehydration -- any one of which could be tied to GI trouble, such as a virus, appendicitis, or food poisoning.

Good GI Health

Tricks to keeping your poop on track are simple ones: a healthy diet high in fiber, lots of water, and regular exercise.

"Generally, 20-25 grams of dietary fiber per day is recommended, and for many people, you get this much in a healthy diet," Esrailian says. "If you are having infrequent bowel movements and are experiencing discomfort,

then the first easy way to correct it is to increase dietary fiber through food, supplement, or both."

High-fiber powerhouse foods are whole-grain cereals and breads, fresh vegetables and fruit, and nuts. Usually, a day or two of a fiber-focused diet will put your trips to the bathroom back on track.

Proper hydration is also key for your colon, ensuring you have enough fluid in your body to move stool through the digestive track and out the other end on a regular basis, Esrailian says.

Exercise is also beneficial for your bowels. It helps improve GI "motility," he says, and can often alleviate constipation by improving your metabolic and digestive processes.

Overall, normal is a pretty easy mark to make when it comes to your bowel movements, both experts say, and aside from the warning signs they offered, what goes in one end usually comes out the other with minimal problems along the way.

Prostate cancer hormone drugs risky for some men

CHICAGO -- A new study links hormone therapy for prostate cancer with a higher risk of death in older men who've had serious heart problems.

Hormone therapy suppresses the amount of testosterone produced, in turn causing prostate tumors to shrink or grow more slowly. The treatment, involving injections in a doctor's office, can help men with more advanced disease when used with surgery or radiation.

But the side effects are troubling: impotence, bone loss, hot flashes, memory problems, fatigue and an increased risk for diabetes and heart disease.

Researchers followed more than 5,000 men with prostate cancer that hadn't spread. The men, most in their 60s and 70s, were followed for an average of five years.

All the patients had brachytherapy, a type of radiation treatment, at one Illinois treatment center. Thirty percent of them also took hormone therapy for an average of four months.

Five percent of the men in the study had a history of heart failure or heart attack and 43 of those men died. Among those with heart problems, the hormone treatment was linked with a 96 percent higher risk of death after adjusting for other risk factors.

In raw numbers, of the 95 men on hormone therapy who also had a history of serious heart problems, 25 died; and of the 161 men not on hormone therapy who also had a history of heart problems, 18 died.



Officers of the Society:

President

Robert (Bob) Shiell
Home office: (403) 253.1911
Cell: 403.870.8130
email: bobshiell@shaw.ca

Secretary:

Harry Ripley
403.256.7746
email: heripley@shaw.ca

Treasurer

David Todd
403.271.6141
email: squint63@nucleus.com

Executive Director:

Karen Whiteman
403.455.1916
email: karen.whiteman@shaw.ca

Our voicemail: 403.520.1995
www.prostaid.org

Prostaid Calgary Warriors

The Prostaid Calgary Warriors are a caring and compassionate group, well organized and full of information for those men and their families dealing with advanced prostate cancer. The Warriors serve the very important needs of hormone refractory Prostaid Calgary members and all those who have an interest in management of advanced prostate cancer. The Prostaid Calgary Warriors meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:14 pm prior to the main Prostaid Calgary meeting. Warriors meet just outside the auditorium at Foothills Hospital in room #AGW2. Signs will be posted.

Men with advanced prostate cancer, their partners and family members are most welcome to attend. **You will be made welcome!**

For more information call Fred McHenry at (403) 282.3920

Women and Prostate Cancer hold monthly meetings at 730 pm on the 4th Tuesday of every month at South Calgary Health Centre, 31 Sunpark Plaza South East. These informal meetings allow women to share their concerns and experiences in a friendly non-threatening environment.

At the same time, in a different room at SCHC a men's peer support meeting is also held. If you would like more information about either meeting please contact Karen Whiteman at 403.455.1916.

Many thanks to our many friends and supporters!

Prostaid has many generous individuals and companies who support our community work. On behalf of our 900+ members, thank you for your generosity. With your support we will continue our good work in 2009 and onward!

Newsletter * General Meetings * Hospital Visits * One-On-One visits * Speakers * Website

Charitable Number: 86926 1602 RR 0001

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

NOTE: It is NOT necessary to include this form, a receipt will be issued from the information on your cheque.

**Canada Revenue Agency: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/>
or donate online through www.canadahelps.org**



Please make cheque payable to:
Prostaid Calgary Society

Box 72126

R.P.O. Glenmore Landing

Calgary AB, T2V 5H9

Tax Receipts can only be issued to those named on the cheque.