

Name _____



Date _____

The Scoop on Poop

By Joyce Furstenau

From the moment that first bite of juicy hamburger touches your tongue, your body begins breaking it down into smaller and smaller pieces so it can provide your body with energy. Once your body has used up every last bit of protein, carbohydrates, and fat, what's left over is dumped. Your body gets rid of these wastes in the form of **FECES (fee-sees)**, commonly called poop. And, yes, everyone poops.

Your body's digestive system is an amazing machine that is fueled by food. It actually starts when you get the first whiff of that burger sizzling on the grill. **YUM!** That's when saliva begins to form in your mouth. The saliva helps you to break down the food when you chew, making it easier to swallow. Once you swallow, that bite of burger is propelled by muscles in your **ESOPHAGUS (eh-saf-a-gus)** into your stomach. The process takes about ten seconds.

It stays in your stomach for several hours where it is attacked by stomach acids. The acids break it down into a soupy liquid. It is now ready to do its work. A muscle called a **SPHINCTER (sfink-ter)** opens up, and the mushed up food goes into the small intestine.

The small intestine begins its task of taking the "soup" and then absorbing all the nutrients. It sends all these useful nutrients into your bloodstream. This provides the fuel for your body. What's left behind goes into the large intestine, which is also called the **COLON (coe-lin)**. From there, the leftovers move into the last sixteen inches of the colon, called the **RECTUM (rek-tum)**. That waste comes out your **ANUS (a-nuss)** when you go to the bathroom in the form of feces, stool, bowl movement, number two, doo-doo, or poop.

What is poop made of? Mostly water that wasn't absorbed, dead intestinal cells, and fiber from food that wasn't digested, along with bacteria. It's the bacteria that gives poop its stink. In fact, about one fourth of most poo-poo is bacteria. **EW!** No wonder it stinks!

Why is poop brown? Well, it isn't always brown, but it is most of the time. The color comes from the combination of a liquid made by your liver called **BILE** and an orange-yellow substance called **BILIRUBIN (bill-uh-roob-in)**. When iron combines with the bilirubin it turns poop brown.

Sometimes your digestive tract doesn't work right. This can cause you to do the "Green-Apple-Quick-Step" and you get **DIARRHEA (die-uh-ree-uh)**. In other words, you've got the trots and your poop is very watery. **YUCK!** The opposite problem can occur if you don't drink enough water or don't get enough fiber in your diet. This condition is called **CONSTIPATION (con-sti-pa-shun)**. That's when your poop is stuck. Drinking water or exercise can help constipation. Most of the time, these problems can be treated by changing your diet or taking over the counter medications. Both of these conditions can become serious, however, and you may need to consult a doctor.

In any case, pooping is a very important bodily function, without which we could not live. Since there is so much bacteria in poop, don't forget to wash your hands after using the toilet so you won't spread germs. That's pretty much the scoop on poop. **PHEW!**

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Questions

_____ 1. Your digestive system starts working when?

- A. when you can smell your food
- B. after you swallow your food
- C. after you take your first bite
- D. when you start chewing your food

2. Once you swallow, your food is sent to your stomach by what organ?

3. What muscle controls the opening from your stomach to your small intestine?

_____ 4. What is the job of your small intestine?

- A. send nutrients into your bloodstream
- B. send messages to your stomach that it is empty
- C. send messages to your brain that you are full
- D. send messages when it is time to use the bathroom

_____ 5. The last sixteen inches of your colon is called what?

- A. rectum
- B. sphincter
- C. large intestine
- D. anus

6. When iron combines with bilirubin what happens to your poop?
