The defecation reflex is one important component of healthy bowel function. When it is working properly, the defecation reflex produces muscular contractions that signal the body that stools are ready and it is time to permit a bowel movement.

When the reflex is weak or unresponsive, the signal to move the bowel can become unreliable. Stools that are withheld (not moved when they are ready) can dry out, loose volume, harden, and become difficult to pass. This is one way that constipation develops.

Moving the bowel whenever the reflex is activated, maintains the responsiveness of this reflex and helps to avoid the development of constipation. The text below explores the role this reflex plays in healthy bowel function.

Can Fruit-Eze™ Pure Fruit Regularity Blend Help?
Yes. Fruit-Eze™ pure fruit regularity blend helps to make stools that have good volume and texture. When stools have good volume they are better able to stimulate the nerve endings that line the colon wall. The stimulation of these nerves “works” the intestinal muscles, toning and strengthening them with each movement.

Producing well formed stools regularly helps to promote the stimulation, and therefore the tone, in the muscles that are engaged when the defecation reflex is activated. This helps prevent constipation.

What is the Defecation Reflex and How is it Involved in Moving the Bowel?
When stools are ready to be eliminated, the defecation reflex is activated. This reflex is the signal to the body that the bowel is ready to be moved. To move the bowel, a coordinated autonomous and voluntary symphony of nerves and muscles occurs.

Stools that are ready move down through the colon into the rectum. This movement, and the pressure from the presence of the stools in the rectal sac, induce a neurological reflex in the rectum that relax the internal rectal sphincter and stimulate the muscles to contract. Then, by way of further neurological reflexes and the release of chemicals, there is relaxation of the external anal sphincter. With the help of conscious abdominal straining (gently bearing down when moving the bowel) defecation is permitted to occur.
When Does the Defecation Reflex Commonly Occur?
The defecation reflex is triggered whenever stools are ready to be eliminated. The reflex commonly occurs:
• About forty-five minutes to an hour after rising from sleep
• About forty-five minutes after drinking a hot beverage
• About forty-five minutes after eating a meal (even a snack)
• After exercise (even if it is only a few minutes of exercise)

It is not uncommon for a combination of these things to occur in succession. And, when they do, you can anticipate that the reflex may be activated.

For example, in the morning after you wake, you may walk about getting dressed, you may have breakfast, and a hot beverage. Finally, by the time that you walk to the bus, or climb into a car, you may find that the defecation reflex may begin to activate. Working with the rhythm of your body, by consciously making time in your morning schedule to allow response time for the reflex, can help you to both preserve the responsiveness of the defecation reflex and help avoid constipation. Ignoring your body’s natural tendency, by withholding stools, can lead to constipation later in the day.

What Happens When the Defecation Reflex is Ignored and Stools are Withheld?
The defecation reflex disengages after about fifteen minutes of being ignored (or sooner if a bowel movement is permitted). Like any other muscle that is not used, it will breakdown and fail to function if continuously ignored.

When the defecation reflex is ignored, constipation will result as the stool that is withheld becomes dried out, hard and difficult to pass. Retained stools can stretch out the rectal sack. A stretched out rectal sack requires more and more stool to fill the rectal sack before the reflex is activated. This causes even more stool to dry out as it collects behind the previously retained stool.

What Factors Cause the Reflex to Become Weak or Breakdown?
The most common factor leading to the break down of the reflex is *ignoring* the defecation reflex. Other factors may be:
• Certain Medications. Muscle relaxants can relax the defecation reflex. Pain relief medications can interfere with signals to the brain that stimulate the defecation reflex. Stimulant laxatives (unless directed by a doctor). These laxatives can destroy the defecation reflex as their purgative action on the colon prevents the normal stimulation and operation of the defecation reflex.
• Withholding stools longer than necessary to locate a bathroom.* Withholding stools separates the stimulus and response action of the reflex which would normally help to maintain its effectiveness.
• Withholding stools routinely. Withholding stools daily* stretches out the rectal sac. A stretched out sac requires more stool to collect before the reflex will be stimulated again.
• Fear of pain with defecation. Pain from hemorrhoids or anal fissures can cause some people to withhold stools and delay the stimulation and response action of the defecation reflex.
• Medications. Those that relax muscles can also relax the defecation reflex.
• Pain relief medications. These drugs can interfere with signals to the brain that stimulate the defecation reflex.
• Surgery. A temporary paralysis of the intestines and the normal reflexive action of defecation reflex can occur.
• Aging. The process of aging may include breakdown of the responsiveness of the defecation reflex for some individuals.

* This may be common for individuals who avoid use of public restrooms, who have a busy schedule, who work long hours without breaks, or who have limited access to restrooms during work or play.

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Can Fruit-Eze™ Help?

Yes. Fruit-Eze™, all natural fruit blend, may help your body to improve and maintain intestinal muscle tone. Overtime, increased muscle tone may help influence the responsiveness of your defecation reflex.

Some customers have reported that they are able to feel the defecation reflex working properly again after a few months of using all natural Fruit-Eze™ pure fruit regularity blend.

With delicious Fruit-Eze™, you can achieve regularity, avoid constipation, avoid constipation leading to impaction, and avoid laxative use.

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