

Bowel Urgency FAQ

Millions live with it. You're not alone.

What Is Bowel Urgency?

Bowel urgency is the sudden and powerful need to have a bowel movement that is hard to delay. Many people describe it as feeling like they must find a bathroom immediately.

Who experiences bowel urgency?

Bowel urgency can affect anyone, but it's especially common in people with conditions like:

- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)
 - Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Other gastrointestinal disorders, including cancer, pelvic floor dysfunction or bile acid malabsorption

How common is it?

- In the general U.S. adult population, about 3.3% report experiencing fecal urgency; that's roughly 8 to 9 million people.
- Among people with IBD, urgency is extremely more common: About 74% of Crohn's patients and 83% of ulcerative colitis patients report urgency.
- Even during remission, urgency can persist.

Why does bowel urgency happen?

It can be caused by:

- Inflammation in the bowel (as in Crohn's or UC)
- Abnormal gut motility (IBS)
- Dietary triggers such as caffeine, fatty foods or artificial sweeteners
- Stress and anxiety
- Side effects of medications

How does bowel urgency affect daily life?

- **Physical:** Constant need to be near a bathroom, disrupted routines
- **Emotional:** Anxiety, embarrassment, depression
- **Social:** Avoiding travel, work or social events

Can bowel urgency be managed?

Yes. *Options include:*

- **Lifestyle strategies:** Dietary adjustments, hydration, bathroom planning
- **Medical treatment:** Medications to reduce inflammation, control diarrhea or manage IBS
- **Mental health support:** Coping strategies, therapy, support groups
- **Self-management tools:** Symptom trackers, tip sheets, mental health trackers

Should I talk to my doctor about bowel urgency?

Absolutely! If urgency is frequent, affects your quality of life or is accompanied by blood in the stool, weight loss or fever, you should seek medical advice. Talking openly with your provider is the first step toward relief.



How can I talk about something so embarrassing?

Most of us find it difficult to open up about something that we don't normally discuss in 'polite company,' but that's exactly what your doctor is there for! Every single day, they deal with patients experiencing unpleasant digestive systems, and you can be confident that they've seen it all before. Getting past that initial moment of embarrassment is the very best thing you can do for your long term physical and emotional wellbeing.

Where can I find help and resources?

The National Association for Continence provides a variety of free resources for you, including:

- Downloadable symptom trackers and doctor discussion guides
- Educational videos and podcasts
- A supportive community for sharing experiences

Visit NAFC.org/bowelurgency today for access to all of these and more.



Find relief.
Take Control.
Start here.