

## 1 What kind of doctor treats stool color changes?

Most often, people will contact their primary care health-care professional with questions about the color of their stool. These include health-care professionals who care for infants and children. Depending upon the cause of the stool color change, certain specialists may need to be involved. For example, for red or black stool due to bleeding, a gastroenterologist may be needed to perform endoscopy, to look for a bleeding source in the stomach or intestine. Gastroenterologists are the specialist that helps manage other diseases of the intestinal tract, including Crohn's Disease, pancreatitis, and celiac disease, that can cause color changes because of poor absorption of nutrients from the diet.



## 2 How is the cause of stool color changes diagnosed?

In most cases, a diagnosis, if any, cannot be made by stool color alone.

The patient and the doctor need to consider other symptoms, past medical history, dietary changes, and medications to help decide what has caused the stool to change color. Physical examination will be important to help decide the significance of the stool color.

Stool may be tested to look for blood, fat, or infection. Blood tests may be necessary depending upon the clinical situation. Depending on the change in color, it may be necessary to evaluate the pancreas, liver or GI tract.

## 3 When should I contact my doctor about stool color or texture changes?

Aside from black, red, or maroon stools that may mean bleeding is a possibility, and require urgent assessment and treatment, most color changes are not an emergency. The significance is determined based on other symptoms that might be present.

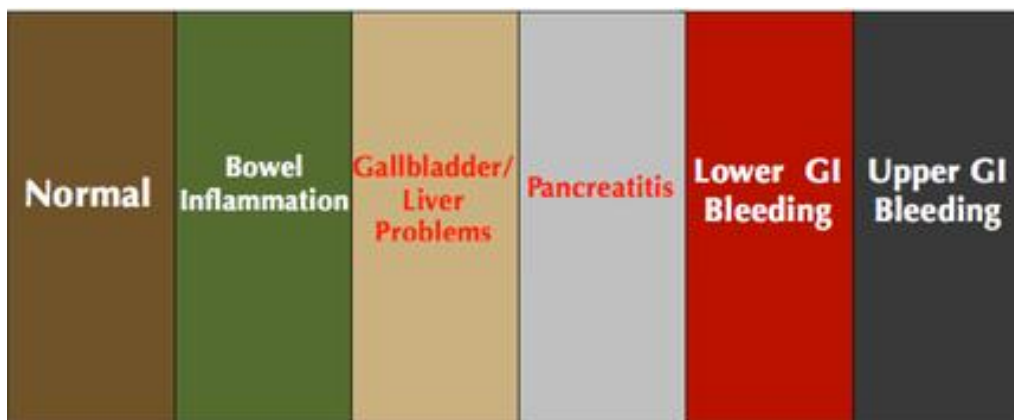
3 (cont)

Women who are [pregnant](#) often note changes in their bowel pattern. Stool can turn black because of iron and vitamin [supplements](#). Iron can also turn stool greenish. As the uterus enlarges and increases pressure within the pelvis, [constipation](#) may occur and [hemorrhoids](#) can develop and cause blood in the stool.

If there is no underlying problem, stool color changes are often due to changes in the diet and will resolve in a couple of days. If this is not the case and changes persist, it is appropriate to contact your health-care professional and seek medical attention.

Contact your health-care professional if you have stool color changes and have associated symptoms such as [vomiting](#), diarrhea, [fever](#) or [abdominal pain](#).

It is important to remember that every person is different and changes in bowel habit be it color, size, frequency, or consistency (hard or soft) may be normal for one person or a sign of a potential problem for another.



## Stool Color Changes

Potential Cause	Comment	Sub-Header
Black	<a href="#">GI bleeding</a>	This is an emergency
Black	Iron, bismuth	Cannot presume this to be the reason for the stool color
Maroon	GI bleeding	This is an emergency
Red	Hemorrhoids	Only one of the potential causes. Do not ignore
Red	Inflammatory bowel disease	Consult health-care professional
Red	Infection, diverticular bleed	Consult health-care professional
Red	Tumor, rapid upper GI bleed	Consult health-care professional
Green	May be normal	Consult health-care professional
Green	Diet high in green vegetables	Consult health-care professional
Green	Associated with diarrhea	Consult health-care professional
Brown	Normal color	Consult health-care professional
Yellow	Diseases of the pancreas	Malabsorption
Yellow	Celiac disease, cystic fibrosis	Consult health-care professional
Yellow	Giardia infection	Consult health-care professional
Clay, pale yellow or white	Liver or biliary disease	Lack of bile in the stool