

# Self-abdominal massage

## What is it for?

Abdominal massage has been used as a treatment for constipation for many years.

Research shows it can:

- promote contractions of the large intestine which moves faecal matter along the gut
- speed up the time it takes stool to move through the intestines to the anus
- soften stool and make it easier to pass
- relieve abdominal pain caused by cramps/wind
- reduce the need for laxatives

## Who would it benefit?

- chronic constipation and/or faecal incontinence
- neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's
- the elderly/immobile
- stable spinal injury patients

## It is not suitable for patients with:

- abdominal wounds of less than 6 weeks
- inflammatory bowel disease
- spastic colon with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- unstable spinal injuries
- pregnancy

## How to perform self-abdominal massage

Lie on your back with pillow under knees.

Apply suitable massage oil over your abdominal wall.

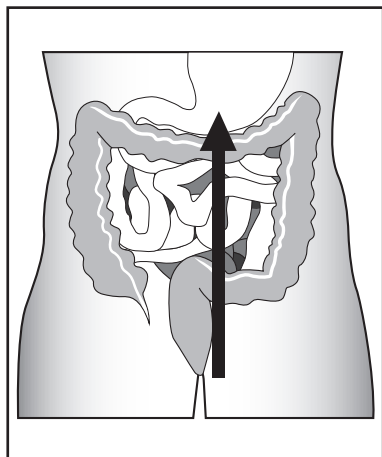
There are four basic strokes: **stroking, effleurage, kneading and vibration.**

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### Step 1 - stroking

Place both your hands at the base of abdomen and with the flats of the hands stroke upwards towards the rib cage. This prepares the muscles for being massaged deeply.

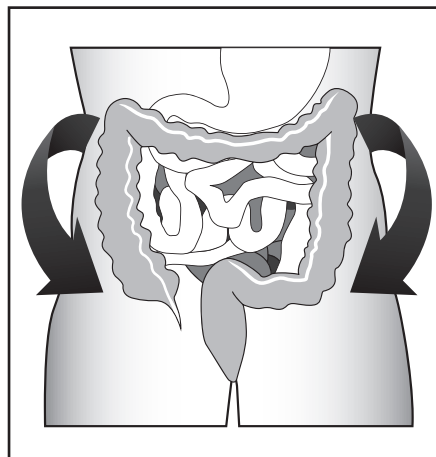
**Repeat about 10 times.**



### Step 2 - stroking

Place both palms of hands on small of back. Move hands forwards over top of hips and down both sides of pelvis towards groin. This stimulates the nerve which controls bowel function.

**Repeat about 10 times.**

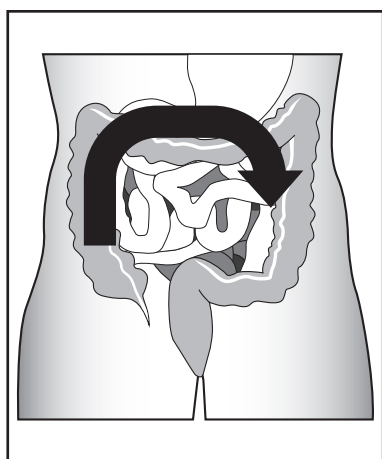


### Step 3 - effleurage

Effleurage is applied in a clockwise direction around the presumed course of the large intestine. Imagine you are trying to squeeze toothpaste out of a tube.

Start with right hand in a fist placed in lower right groin. You can add other hand over first for added pressure. Slide the hand up the abdomen towards the ribcage, then across the abdomen and then down the left hand wall. This will assist in propelling faecal matter along the gut. This should be a firm, deep pressure throughout.

**Continue for about 2 minutes.**



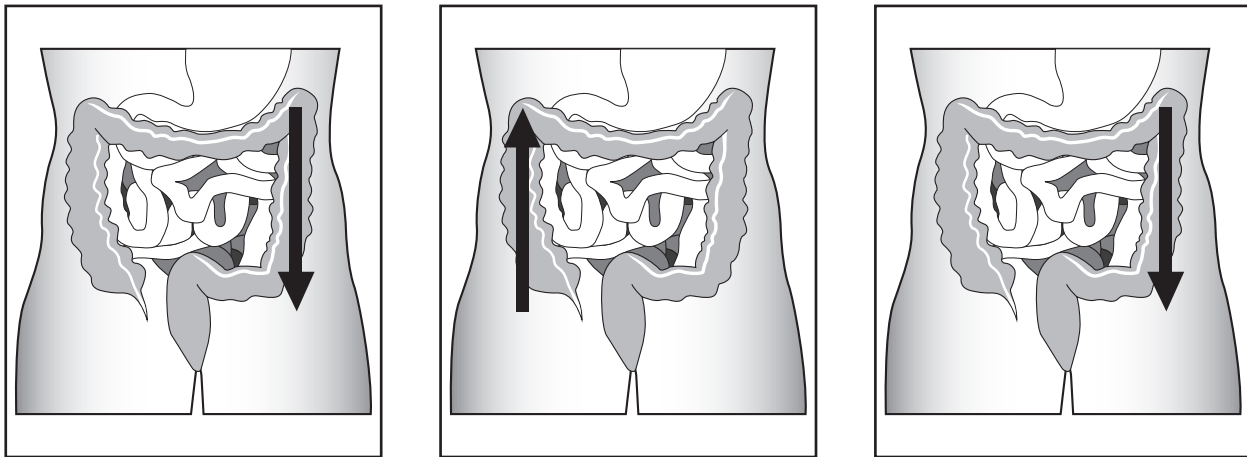
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## Step 4 - kneading

Start with hand in a fist on upper left abdomen just below ribcage. You can add other hand over first for added pressure. Perform deep circular movements with wrist as you move down the 'down pipe' of the colon. Aim for 8-10 circles as you move down. Repeat from top to bottom about 10 times.

Now repeat on the other side but starting in right lower groin, circling up the right 'up pipe' of the colon.

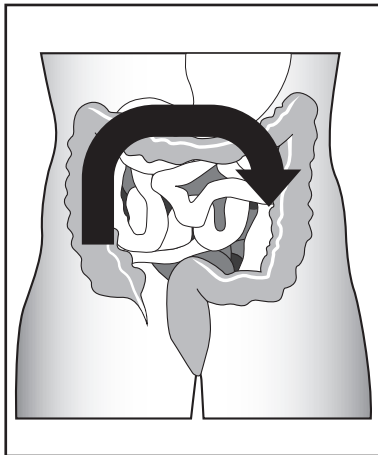
**Repeat from bottom to top about 10 times.**



## Step 5 - effleurage

Repeat **Step 3**.

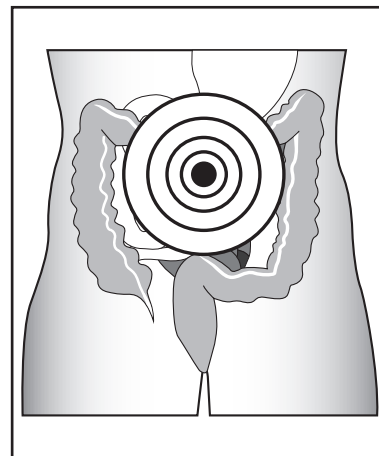
**Continue for about 2 minutes.**



## Step 6 - vibrations

With one hand over the other, palms down, push down and at same time make small shakes over the abdominal wall.

**Repeat about 10 times.**



**Massage techniques courtesy of:**

McClurg D, Hagen S, Hawkin S and Lowe-Strong A.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email [wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net](mailto:wcnt.yourexperience@nhs.net)