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Next

What causes blood in the toilet bowl

The stool has a number of different substances including wastes, indigestible foods like fiber, mucus, water and bacteria. Blood should not be present, even though some of the components of blood cell breakdown such as bilirubin, may be present. When blood is seen in the bowel movement or detected with medical tests then it has to be investigated further because it is a cause for concern. How does blood enter bowel movement? Blood enters the bowel movement somewhere along the course of the digestive tract. This means it can be from bleeding in the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum or anus. Sometimes bowel from the genitalia or urinary tract may be mistaken for blood in bowel movement. **Melena** When there is bleeding high up in the digestive tract like from the esophagus or stomach then the blood becomes degraded as it travels down the bowels to be passed out with stool. This may cause the stool to look dark and tarry which is known as melena. **Hematochezia** When there is bleeding lower down in the digestive tract like bleeding from the colon or rectum then the blood may be noticed on the stool, in the toilet water or when wiping after a bowel movement. This fresh red blood in the bowel movement is known as hematochezia. **Fecal Occult Blood Test** Often the blood is not visible to the naked eye and only detected when diagnostic investigations are conducted on a stool sample. The fecal occult blood test (FOBT) is a technique to detect blood in the stool. Even small amounts of blood may be detectable with this test. **Gastrointestinal Bleeding Irrespective of the location, blood in the bowel movement means that there is bleeding somewhere in the digestive tract. This is also known as the gastrointestinal tract or simply as the gut. There are various different conditions which may cause this gastrointestinal bleeding. Bowel movement blood is just a symptom of these conditions. WARNING: Blood in the stool should always be taken seriously. While it may be due to many conditions that are acute and not of a serious nature, sometimes this bleeding in the bowel movement can be a sign of life-threatening conditions like colorectal cancer. Always consult with a doctor if rectal bleeding persists or if other severe symptoms are also present. A prompt diagnosis of colorectal cancer is important for a better outcome. Read more on rectal bleeding. Causes of Bowel Movement Blood** Any bleeding anywhere in the gut may give rise to bowel movement blood, whether visible as fresh red blood in the stool, black tarry stools or blood only detected upon diagnostic tests like the fecal occult blood test (FOBT). Although even bleeding from the mouth can be the cause of bowel movement blood, the more likely causes that are important to consider include the following. **Hemorrhoids** Visible blood upon wiping, in the bowel movement and sometimes in the toilet water is often due to hemorrhoids (piles). This is a condition where the rectal veins become swollen and inflamed. It is usually painful, causes burning and itching in the anus and rectum as well as tenesmus (urging to pass stool even after a bowel movement). However, sometimes hemorrhoids may present with no other symptoms apart from blood in the bowel movement. **Anal Fissures** Anal fissures are tiny tears that occur in the delicate lining of the anus. It occurs when passing large stools, with constipation or chronic diarrhea. The tears heal quickly if there is no further irritation. The blood in the bowel movement is usually accompanied by pain while passing stool and thereafter as well as itching and burning in the area, similar to hemorrhoids. **Peptic Ulcer** A bleeding peptic ulcer is one of the more common causes of blood loss from the upper part of the gut. These ulcers mainly occur in the duodenum or stomach but can also arise in the esophagus. The bleed is usually slow and persistent but can become severe if there is a perforation (hole). **Inflammatory Bowel Disease** Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is another common cause of blood in the bowel movement. The gut wall becomes inflamed and ulcerated with bleeding at some sites. Crohn's disease can occur anywhere in the gut so the bleeding may even arise in the upper gut. Ulcerative colitis is usually isolated to the colon and rectum where there may be blood loss. **Varices** Varices are abnormal enlargements of veins mainly in the esophagus or stomach. These veins can burst and cause blood to leak out into the gut. When it does rupture, there can be massive blood loss. It is most commonly associated with liver disease like cirrhosis. Apart from blood in the bowel movement, sometimes there is also bloody vomiting (hematemesis). **Diverticulosis** Diverticula (singular ~ diverticulum) are abnormal pouches that form in the colon. These pouches can sometimes bleed often causing visible blood to appear in the bowel movement. It tends to arise suddenly. The exact cause of diverticulosis (formation of diverticula) is unclear but is more frequently seen in people over the age of 40 years and may be associated with chronic constipation. **Cancer** Cancer anywhere in the gut can lead to bleeding. This may not be obvious higher up the gut but visible blood in the bowel movement along with changes in bowel habit and unintentional weight loss should raise the concern about colorectal cancer. It is among the more common and deadliest of cancers. Read more on what is colon cancer. **Tumors** Benign (non-cancerous) tumors may also be responsible for bleeding in the gut. This is mainly seen with colonic polyps, although some of these polyps may be precancerous. However, most colon polyps do not cause any symptoms and are discovered during diagnostic investigations like a colonoscopy. **Infections** Gastrointestinal infections (gastroenteritis, colitis) are another possible cause of bleeding in the bowel movement. It typically presents with diarrhea which may be bloody. This is more often seen with bacteria (bacillary dysentery) such as an infection with Shigella, Salmonella, Campylobacter and Aeromonas spp. It may also be seen in amoebic dysentery caused by Entamoeba histolytica. Rectal bleeding is a symptom of conditions like hemorrhoids, anal fissures, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), ulcers and colorectal cancer. Typically, you notice rectal bleeding on toilet paper, in the water of the toilet bowl or in your stool. It's important to contact your healthcare provider if you experience rectal bleeding because it could be a sign of a serious medical condition. **Overview Possible Causes Care and Treatment** When to Call the Doctor **Rectal Bleeding** **Rectal Bleeding** Looking down into a toilet and seeing blood can be alarming. Your mind might go to many places as alarm bells ring that something is wrong. This is often rectal bleeding. A symptom of many different medical conditions, rectal bleeding can vary from being mild to being a sign of a serious condition like colorectal cancer. If you're experiencing rectal bleeding, you might see blood in a few different ways — on your toilet paper as you wipe, in the water of the toilet bowl or in your poop. It can be different colors, ranging from bright red to a dark maroon to black. The color of blood you see can actually indicate where the bleeding might be coming from. Bright red blood usually means bleeding that's low in your colon or rectum. Dark red or maroon blood can mean that you have bleeding higher in the colon or in the small bowel. Melena (dark and tar-like stool) often points to bleeding in the stomach, such as bleeding from ulcers. Sometimes, rectal bleeding isn't visible to the naked eye and can only be seen through a microscope. This type of bleeding is usually found during a lab test of a stool sample. Is rectal bleeding serious? In some cases, rectal bleeding can be a minor symptom of a condition that can be easily treated. Hemorrhoids, for example, can cause you to experience rectal bleeding. This usually doesn't last long and hemorrhoids are often easy to treat. However, rectal bleeding can sometimes be a sign of a serious condition like colorectal cancer. It's important to keep track of any bleeding you are experiencing. If it's heavy, frequent or causing you to worry, call your healthcare provider to check it out. How does rectal bleeding appear? You might see or experience rectal bleeding in a few different ways, including: Seeing blood on your toilet paper when you wipe. Seeing blood in the bowl of the toilet when you are using the bathroom — the water in the bowl might look like it's been dyed red. Noticing dark red, black or tarry poop while you are having a bowel movement. Rectal bleeding can be bright red or darker in color. You can also have rectal bleeding without being able to see it. This can happen when you have very small amounts of blood in your stool — called occult bleeding. How would my stool look if I had rectal bleeding? When you have blood in your stool it can look a few different ways. You may have bright red streaks of blood on your poop or you could see blood mixed in with it. Stool could also look very dark, almost black, and tarry. Sometimes, you can have blood in your stool that's not visible. This is called occult bleeding. This can be a sign of bleeding inside your digestive tract. It can also signal a more serious condition like an inflammation disease in your intestines or cancer. Occult bleeding is usually found during lab tests that look at a sample of your poop to check for small amounts of blood. This is called a fecal occult blood test and it can be used as a way to screen for possible colorectal cancer. Your healthcare provider might recommend this if you have a family history of colorectal cancer. One thing to keep in mind when you see an unusual color in your poop is what you ate. There are certain foods that can change the color of your stool and make it look red or even black. This is often mistaken for blood in your stool. What are the symptoms of rectal bleeding? The symptoms of rectal bleeding can vary depending on what is causing the bleeding. Most causes of rectal bleeding are treatable and not serious. In some cases, rectal bleeding can be a symptom of a serious disease, such as colorectal cancer. Because it can be hard to know the cause of your rectal bleeding at home, it's usually a good idea to reach out to your healthcare provider if you have rectal bleeding. Some symptoms you might have with rectal bleeding can include: Feeling rectal pain and/or pressure. Seeing bright red blood in or on your stool, underwear, toilet paper or in the toilet bowl. Having stool that's red, maroon or black in color. Having stool that has a tar-like appearance. Experiencing mental confusion. Feeling lightheaded or dizzy. Fainting. In some very severe cases, rectal bleeding can lead to shock. If you experience any symptoms of shock, call 911 right away and get help. The symptoms of shock can include: Experiencing a sudden drop in your blood pressure. Having a fast heart rate. Not being able to urinate. Slipping into unconsciousness. There are many different reasons why you might experience rectal bleeding. The causes of rectal bleeding can vary from common and mild conditions to more severe and rare conditions that need immediate medical treatment. Causes of rectal bleeding can include: Hemorrhoids: The most common cause of rectal bleeding, hemorrhoids are swollen veins in the rectum (internal hemorrhoids) or the anus (external hemorrhoids). You can develop hemorrhoids for many reasons, including chronic constipation, straining during bowel movements, pregnancy, lifting heavy objects, having anal intercourse and having a higher body weight (obesity). Hemorrhoids aren't a medical emergency and the blood you may see on your toilet paper or in the toilet bowl isn't something to be majorly concerned about. Anal fissure: Sometimes confused for a hemorrhoid, an anal fissure is a split or tear in the skin around the anus. This happens when you have very hard stool that's difficult to pass. The extra pressure of the bowel movement causes the skin to split open. An anal fissure can cause you to see blood when you go to the bathroom, as well as feel burning during bowel movements. Anal fissures usually go away on their own over time. Anal abscess or fistula: There are actually small glands inside your anus that are meant to help you pass stool. These glands can become infected causing abscesses or fistulas. When the gland inside the anus builds up puss, causing a blockage, it's an abscess. An anal fistula is a tiny tunnel that connects the abscess to the skin around the anus. These conditions can be caused by inflammatory bowel disease, tuberculosis or radiation treatments. Diverticulosis/Diverticulitis: These conditions happen when small pouches — called diverticuli — develop in weakened sections of your intestine. These diverticuli can protrude through the walls of your bowels, causing bleeding and infections. When these pouches get infected, they can cause symptoms like abdominal pain, fever and a sudden change in bowel habits. Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD): Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is swelling of the small or large intestine. There are two types of IBD — crohn's disease and colitis. Crohn's disease is a condition where you develop patches of swelling in the digestive tract. In colitis, the swelling is mainly in the large bowel. People with IBD might experience fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramping, intestinal blockages, and rectal bleeding. Ulcers: When the amount of digestive fluids in your intestines is out of balance, it can damage the lining of your digestive tract and cause ulcers. These can bleed, causing you to have black stool that's sometimes tar-like in appearance. Large polyps: A polyp can look like a mushroom that's growing out of the side of your bowel. Large polyps can bleed, causing you to experience rectal bleeding. In some cases, polyps can turn into cancer if left untreated. It's important to have rectal bleeding related to polyps checked because it could be a sign of colorectal cancer. Are there any foods that can change the color of my stool in a similar way to rectal bleeding? There are certain foods that can make your poop an unusual color. You can have green, yellow and even black stool. This can happen for a variety of reasons - having too much bile during digestion, having a medical condition like inflammatory bowel disease or celiac disease, being on antibiotics, or even just eating foods with strong color pigments. Often, blood can make your stool look very dark and almost black. Foods like black licorice, beets, dark berries (blueberries and blackberries) and red gelatin can all make your poop look very dark. This can easily be confused for blood in your stool. If you notice very dark poop during a bowel movement, think back to what you ate recently. There's a chance that what you ate could be the cause for the usually dark stool. Can straining too hard for a bowel movement cause rectal bleeding? Straining too hard during a bowel movement can cause rectal bleeding. This is often related to constipation. When you strain, you can cause conditions like hemorrhoids or anal fissures. Very hard stool can actually cause the skin around your anus to tear, causing you to see blood. Treating constipation can help prevent this from happening. There are several ways your healthcare provider can evaluate rectal bleeding to help figure out the cause. Your provider might start by asking you about the situation around your rectal bleeding. Some questions may include: When did the rectal bleeding start? What did you eat the day before seeing the rectal bleeding? How frequently do you have a bowel movement? Have you been constipated? Were you straining during your bowel movement? Do you have pain when you have the rectal bleeding? Is there blood on your stool (and what does that look like), in the toilet bowl or when you wipe? Do you have hemorrhoids? Do you have any inflammatory bowel conditions? Do you have a family history of colorectal cancer? These questions can help your healthcare provider narrow down a possible cause of your bleeding. There are also tests that your provider can do to help determine the cause. Tests to help diagnose the cause of rectal bleeding can include: A physical exam of the rectum and anus. A colonoscopy. A sigmoidoscopy. A fecal occult blood test (a Hemocult® is a version of this test that can be done in your provider's office). Your healthcare provider may suggest only one of these tests, or do several of them together to try and discover the cause of your rectal bleeding. Is bright red blood in my stool worse than darker blood? The longer the blood is in your digestive tract, the darker it will typically look. This is because there are digestive chemicals in your body that naturally break down everything that moves through your digestive tract. The blood gets darker the longer it's in contact with these chemicals. If your bleeding is higher up in the digestive tract, it might appear darker in the toilet. If you see bright red blood, that can mean it's lower in your digestive tract or is moving through your body very quickly. While there are many benign (not harmful) causes of bright red bleeding, there are fewer benign causes of darker blood — for this reason, dark blood may be more concerning, and warrants workup by your healthcare provider. How do I treat rectal bleeding? In most cases, rectal bleeding can be treated by caring for the cause of the bleeding. Rectal bleeding is often a part of a bigger issue that needs to be taken care of. Once that condition has been treated, the bleeding usually stops. Treatment options can vary depending on the condition. Conditions like anal fissures can go away on their own over time or be treated with ointments. Hemorrhoids are another common cause of rectal bleeding that can be treated by either resolving any constipation issues, changing your diet and water intake, or possibly having surgery. One more severe cause of rectal bleeding can be cancer. If this is the case, your healthcare provider will develop a treatment plan to treat the cancer, often removing any tumors. Will rectal bleeding go away on its own? Depending on the cause of the bleeding, your rectal bleeding can actually stop on its own. However, you need to pay attention to your body and keep track of the bleeding. If it happens one time and then stops, take note of it, but it most likely isn't an emergency. If you have heavy rectal bleeding or are regularly seeing blood, reach out to your healthcare provider to get immediate care. It's always a good idea to let your healthcare provider know about any rectal bleeding you have experienced. It's usually a good idea to reach out to your healthcare provider whenever you have rectal bleeding. It can be a sign of another health condition that might need treatment. If you have heavy bleeding or are seeing blood in multiple bowel movements, it's urgent that you see your provider. Rectal bleeding can have serious causes that need to be treated. What questions should I ask my doctor about rectal bleeding during an appointment? If you're experiencing rectal bleeding, calling your healthcare provider and going in for an appointment is often a good idea. Your provider will figure out what's causing the bleeding and develop a plan to stop the bleeding. It's important to ask any questions you might have during this appointment. Don't be embarrassed to talk about your bowel movements or details about your poop. This information might seem disgusting, but it will help your provider know what's happening and find the best way to help you feel better. 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