

Last night's asparagus in my stool ? Cause for concern? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I was wondering if there is something wrong with me if my stool is undigested. I just pooped and my asparagus from last night was completely intact. Is something wrong with my digestive system!?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Ruh roh! To the Mystery Machine, gang! ^[2] Worrying about digestive irregularities could get anyone down in the dumps, but kudos to you for assessing your stool ? a rich source of information about what's going on in your body. Having undigested food in your stool doesn't necessarily mean anything is wrong with your digestive system, but only an appointment with a health care provider can answer your question with certainty because there are some cases in which an undigested stool can indeed be a sign of a health issue.

According to the Mayo Clinic ^[3], undigested food in stools is usually caused by consuming foods high in fiber. If there are no additional symptoms, such as diarrhea or weight loss, seeing your greens intact after a bowel movement is usually no reason for a second look in the porcelain throne. In fact, having adequate fiber in your diet is healthy! To learn more about why fiber is so good for the body, check out Benefits of eating fiber ^[4]. As you'll read in that Q&A, there are two kinds of fiber, soluble and insoluble, which are both beneficial. Insoluble fiber, like the type found in asparagus, is not dissolved in water and helps food pass through the digestive system more quickly, sometimes leading to pieces of green veggies in your poo.

When other symptoms ? like diarrhea, weight loss, fatty stools, and excessive bloating, cramping, and gas accompany last night's cuisine-laden number two, it may be a sign of malabsorption. Malabsorption is the inability of the body to absorb certain nutrients from food. There are a wide range of conditions that can cause this, including, but not limited to:

- Milk or soy protein intolerance
- Parasitic infection
- Certain medications
- Certain kinds of cancer
- Certain kinds of surgery
- Celiac disease
- Crohn's disease

- HIV/AIDS

In addition to being caused by various conditions, if left untreated, malabsorption may lead to a host of other negative health consequences, such as:

- Anemia
- Gallstones
- Kidney stones
- Osteoporosis
- Malnutrition
- Vitamin deficiencies

If you're concerned about the presence of symptoms accompanying the visible food in your poop, it might be best to contact your health care provider. Again, having pieces of food in your feces does not necessarily signal any kind of problem, but talking with a health care provider is the only way to be sure.

Best of luck as you make like Scooby Doo-doo and the gang to solve this bowel movement mystery!

Alice!

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