Dear Alice,

My boyfriend and I have been together for almost three years, and we've lived together for more than one, but I still can't do Number Two when he's in the house. It's not a problem during the week when we both go to our separate jobs, but on the weekends, it's usually just the two of us in the house all day (and night) Saturday and Sunday and if I feel the need to poo, I have to wait until Monday. My question is this? are there any adverse health issues I should be concerned about with waiting to poo? I know that holding your pee can give you bladder infections, but is there a similar issue with Number Two?

Thanks,

Patiently Waiting

Answer

Dear Patiently Waiting,

Don't hold it in! Ignoring nature's call could be more than just uncomfortable? it could cause unpleasant side effects and yes, adverse health issues as you mention in your question. There are many well-known tactics partners can utilize when attempting to hide the fact that they just went to the bathroom, including turning on the faucet to hide the sounds, only using public restrooms, and blaming it on the dog. No one wants to feel embarrassed, but it is important that you feel comfortable going to the bathroom in your home? regardless of whether it's #1 or #2.

Aside from the emotional stress over the situation, avoiding going number two (that is, having a bowel movement) can lead to constipation. As food moves through the colon, the colon absorbs water from the food while it forms waste products, or stool. If stool sits in the rectum longer than it should, water will continue to be absorbed from the stool. This will cause constipation where stools are usually hard, dry, small in size, and difficult to eliminate. Some people who are constipated find it painful to have a bowel movement and often experience straining, bloating, and the sensation of a full bowel.

Holding it in could also lead to painful side effects, including hemorrhoids and/or anal fissures (tears in the skin around the anus). These may occur when a person strains to have a bowel movement. Holding it in can also lead to serious damage to your internal sphincter: the muscle in your rectum that relaxes to allow for quick and easy bowel movements. Ignoring the need to go causes the internal sphincter to stop relaxing entirely. Once this occurs, almost
every bowel movement requires straining and pushing, which is unnatural and unhealthy. By the way, holding in urine does not typically cause bladder infections — they are most often caused during vaginal intercourse.

Have you thought about why you are so uncomfortable letting loose? While living with a partner may mean losing the privacy you used to have, it is important to remember that your boyfriend made the decision that he wanted to live with you. Most likely, he isn’t concerned with what you do in the bathroom, but rather interested in increasing the closeness you share. So rather than ignoring your natural urges, relish in your shared space (yes, that includes the bathroom)! If you’re still feeling self-conscious, the following tips may help you cover your tracks while going #2 in your own home:

- **Mask your scent.** One spritz of air freshener sprayed directly into the bowl should do the trick. But don’t overdo it — this may just call attention to the underlying smell. If there’s no air freshener in sight, you can light a match, a candle, or spray some perfume.
- **Laugh it off.** Make a joke of it, such as “I wouldn’t go into the bathroom if I were you!” Once you’ve broken the bodily function barrier, it shows that you’re truly comfortable with the person and your relationship could escalate to a new comfort level (albeit, a smelly one).
- **Remember, everyone does it!** Just like breathing, ?pooping? is completely natural. When you gotta go, you gotta go. It is not up to anyone to judge you for what you do on the pot.

Hope these tips keep you (and your bowel) moving, no matter what day of the week.

Alice!

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Body Maintenance [3]
Body Emissions [4]

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Published date:
Feb 17, 2012

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