



- Only staff trained by an Appropriately Qualified Health Professional (AQHP) can perform this procedure.
- Ensure that the person’s staffing preference, as detailed in their Personal Care Plan, is applied to this procedure.
- This procedure should be read in conjunction with the [NDIS LWB 5600 High Intensity Daily Personal Activities - Procedure](#), [NDIS LWB 5501 Health and Wellbeing - Procedure](#), [NDIS LWB 5531 Personal Care - Plan](#) and in consultation with the person or their HIDPA Complex Bowel Care Plan/Protocol.

This information is intended as a guide only and may not be appropriate in all circumstances – instructions from an AQHP should be followed.

The AQHP is to provide training in any complex bowel care support that is required and that is in the scope of practice of a Disability Support Worker (DSW).

Abdominal Massage



Abdominal Massage Procedure

Check

- Check and follow the person’s Complex Bowel Care Plan.
- Check that the required consumables (the person’s preferred lotion or oil) are available and ready for use.
- Confirm how the person would like to be actively involved in their support, as outlined in their plan, and to the level they choose.
- Explain the procedure to the person and seek their consent to proceed.



Support

This procedure should not be performed:

- Without direction and training by an AQHP.
- If the person has:
 - unexplained pain
 - bleeding or irritated skin
 - stomach wound or other sores
 - is pregnant
 - cancer or tumours
 - unstable spine injury
 - inflammatory bowel disease
 - spastic colon with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

In Spinal Cord Injury, Autonomic Dysreflexia can be related to Bowel: constipation, a full bowel, haemorrhoids, or other rectal irritations.

This is a medical emergency, do not leave the person alone. Immediately call an ambulance (000).

Nausea and vomiting, with other signs of constipation, may indicate a bowel obstruction.

This is a medical emergency. Call an ambulance immediately (000).

Stop the abdominal massage and seek medical attention if any of the following occur:

- No bowel movement for 3 days
- Severe pain
- Distended abdomen
- Blood in stools
- Follow hygiene and infection control procedures.

Abdominal pain/discomfort

- Do not use abdominal massage if the person is experiencing any abdominal pain or discomfort. **Seek medical advice.**

No Bowel Movement

- If the bowels are not opened for 3 days, **seek medical advice.**
Abdominal massage is performed using a circular clockwise motion starting on the right side of the lower abdomen beside the hip bone. This follows the natural movement of the bowel. **Do not start on the left side, which can cause or worsen constipation.**

Correct Direction of Abdominal Massage

- Ensure the correct lifting techniques are followed, per the person's Transferring, Repositioning, and Mobility Plan (TRAM) when supporting a person to change position. For example, a slide sheet or hoist may be appropriate.
- Remember, always massage starting on the person's right.
- Position the person on their back and bend their knees upward. Ensure the stomach is relaxed and the person is comfortable. This procedure should be done on a firm surface like the bed or the floor.
- Position yourself comfortably to perform the massage.
- Wash your hands.
- Expose the person's entire abdomen.
- Warm your hands by rubbing them together for about 30 seconds.
- Ask the person to relax their legs and belly - this can be done by asking if they can bring their knees up to their chest and gently squeeze for 1 or 2 minutes. This can help release some tension in their abdomen. Alternatively, ask them to exhale their breath slowly to relax their body.
- Apply the preferred lotion or oil to your hands.
- Using flat hands, start the massage in a cupping or scooping motion using firm but gentle pressure. The cupping method can be visualised as scooping the motions along the pathway of the colon.
- Massage in upward strokes until reaching under the ribs. This follows the person's ascending colon.
- Then massage across the upper abdomen to just under the left ribs. This follows the transverse colon
- Then massage downward to just beside the left inside hip bone. This follows the descending colon.
- You may be able to feel the colon or hear gurgling noises related to bowel movement.
- Repeat the massage for 5 – 10 minutes or as per the person's plan.
- Stop at any time the person wants to use the toilet.
- Assist the person to the toilet as soon as they feel the urge.
- Assist the person with cleaning up any excess oil or lotion.
- Wash your hands when the massage is completed.



Report

- Document the results of any bowel movement on the [NDIS LWB 5590 Bowel Movement – Recording Chart](#) using the [Bristol Stool Chart](#) as a guide.
- Record any abnormalities, including bruising, pressure injury, skin tags and haemorrhoids, in progress notes and organise for medical review of any abnormalities. See the [NDIS LWB 5554 Responding to Unexplained Bruising Suspicious Mark or Injury - Procedure](#).
- Report any concerns or issues related to the person’s bowel care immediately to the Disability Support Leader¹ or On Call.

For Further Guidance and Advice

Please contact the AQHP who developed the person’s HIDPA Complex Bowel Care Plan.

¹ All references to Disability Support Leader (DSL), includes all Frontline Leadership roles, such as House Supervisor.