

# Special toilet seat helps get job done

It is a non-invasive alternative to treating people with difficulty passing motion

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FOR people who suffer from constipation, there is a new toilet seat on the market that can help ease the problem.

It looks like an ordinary toilet seat, except for a protrusion at the back that fits between the tailbone and the anus.

Private colorectal surgeon Francis Seow-Choen explained that the seat's knob - containing nano silver to prevent infection - prevents the back part of the rectum from overstretching.

He said the Colorec toilet seat, designed by a general practitioner in Malaysia, is a non-invasive alternative to treating people with piles, constipation and fissures or tiny cuts in their anus, and have difficulty passing motion.

The doctor, previously head of colorectal surgery at Singapore General Hospital, is convinced that it offers patients a good, viable alternative to conventional treatment, which in serious cases could involve surgery.

More than 150 of his patients have tried the toilet seat since it became available last year, and the majority say their conditions have improved, said the doctor.

Dr Seow-Choen said those who did not see any improvements were largely small-sized women who were unable to sit on the knob, and people who travel frequently and are unable to use the seat regularly.

It is also unsuitable for children due to their size.

Fissures or cuts in the anal opening are often due to overstretching caused by constipation, and sometimes by diarrhoea.

The cuts or tears in the opening are painful, and the muscle there tends to go into spasm when touched, contracting the anus and pushing the faeces back. This can lead to further constipation.

The condition is fairly common, with Dr Seow-Choen alone seeing two to three such patients a day.

The conventional treatment is to apply a cream that lets the sphincter relax. If this does not work, the next step is surgery to relax the muscle. But this operation can sometimes be tricky with the muscle relaxing so much that it leads to incontinence instead, where the patient has difficulty holding it in.

Mr Oh Guan Loo, 38, who had piles two years ago, said using the Colorec seat felt funny and a bit uncomfortable the first few times he used it. "But it does help," he said.

The telecommunications engineer used to take 15 to 20 minutes of strenuous pushing every time he needed to pass motion. Now, he is in and out in about five minutes and without as much straining.

Dr Seow-Choen did a trial involving 42 patients and only 11 needed surgery after using the seat. The rest found the problem subsided.

He and three other doctors have published a paper on this trial, and have another paper on the subject accepted by a European-based journal for colorectal specialists.

Professor Yeun Kah Hey of the University Sains Malaysia in Penang is another strong advocate of the Colorec seat.

Colorectal surgeons at both the National University Hospital and Alexandra Hospital are currently evaluating the seat.

When the Colorec seat becomes available at pharmacies in the next two months, it is expected to cost just under \$300.

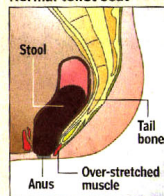
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ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

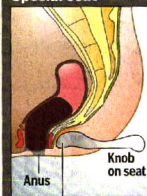
## HOW IT WORKS

### Normal toilet seat

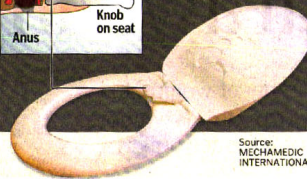


- The muscle around the mouth of the anus descends when motion is passed.
- With constipation, the amount of pressure exerted in pushing the faeces out could tear the over-stretched muscle.

### Special seat



- The toilet seat knob, placed between the tailbone and the anus, provides counter-pressure.
- This stops the muscle from stretching and tearing, even though the person might be pushing hard.



Source: MECHAMEDIC INTERNATIONAL

PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN ST GRAPHICS

## CONDITIONS OF SOME PATIENTS IMPROVED

"I was surprised initially that so many said they can now pass motion very well. Most of those who used the toilet seat didn't need surgery."

Dr Francis Seow-Choen (left, with the Colorec seat)