

Review Article

Squatting or Western Toilet- A Review

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ABSTRACT:

It is an unfortunate fact that many adults living in Western countries have experienced problems when passing stools and with their gastrointestinal health in general. Among the most common of the digestion-related conditions are hemorrhoids, with around half of the American population suffering from symptoms of this ailment which include soreness and bleeding from the rectum. Constipation is another problem that afflicts many people living in economically well-developed countries. In short, people with access to modern bathroom facilities often appear afflicted with complaints that were not so often seen in the past and are not often widespread in less developed areas of the world. This has led some experts to speculate that the widespread adoption of the modern Western toilet has contributed to the prevalence of digestive disorders in affluent countries.

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INTRODUCTION

Western culture has dominated Indians from a long time, we have adopted the western lifestyle in a way that we are overlooking the importance of our own traditions and cultures. The elementary example of us being influenced by western culture is using western toilets instead of Indian ones. Usually, we feel uncomfortable about discussing which one is a better choice. If you look for comfort then western is better but Indian toilets are more hygienic and keep us healthy. A constant debate goes on about which toilet is better- western or India.^{1,2}

Anatomical aspect^{3,4}

- In the squatting position, gravity does most of the work. The weight of the torso presses against the thighs and naturally compresses the colon. Gentle pressure from the diaphragm supplements the force of gravity.
- Squatting relaxes the puborectalis muscle, allowing the anorectal angle to straighten and the bowel to empty completely.
- Squatting lifts the sigmoid colon to unlock the “kink” at the entrance to the rectum. This kink also helps prevent incontinence, by taking some of the pressure off the puborectalis muscle.
- The colon is equipped with an inlet valve (the ileocecal valve) and an outlet valve (the

puborectalis muscle). Squatting simultaneously closes the inlet valve, to keep waste from pushing back up into the small intestine, and opens the outlet valve, to allow wastes to pass freely out of the body. The sitting position defeats the purpose of both valves, making elimination difficult and incomplete, and increasing the risk of waste backing up into the small intestine where it should not be.

Benefits of Squatting

Indian toilets are more hygienic: It may be surprising for all of us, but Indian toilets are more hygienic than the western ones. Thus, it is always preferable to go for Indian toilets in a public place. There is no direct contact of your body with the toilet seat in Indian toilets. Thus, the risk of UTI (Urinary Tract Infection) is less. However, in Western toilets, our skin is in constant touch with the toilet seat. Also, people who use western toilet prefer paper toilet rolls to wipe themselves clean. On the other hand, in Indian toilets, water is the basic wiping factor. Thus, Indian toilets are more hygienic and clean.⁵

Using Indian toilets is a kind of exercise: It is a kind of squat exercise that we are doing. Sitting in such position strengthens our legs and also brings them in motion. Indian toilets lead to better blood circulation in the body. Thus, without hitting any gym, we are can daily perform the physical exercise. Unlike Western toilets, which only initiate sitting on a toilet chair and making no movement.^{6,7}

Indian toilets help in better digestion: Using Indian toilets aids the process of digestion. Sitting in a squat position helps to digest the food properly. It even lays pressure on the bowel movement so that the waste goes out properly. On the other hand, in Western toilets, there is no pressure on the lower body which could encourage bowel movement.⁸

Indian toilets prevent constipation: The positioning of our body in Indian toilets helps to excrete the waste from the body completely. It lays a good amount of pressure and thus the colon in our body becomes clear. According to the experiments and research done by the doctors, they found an interesting fact. They found that the risk of stomach related problems is higher in western toilets than in Indian ones.

Indian toilets are eco-friendly: We use toilet paper in Western toilets, which also leads to wastage of paper. There is no paper wastage in case of Indian toilets. Western toilets require even more water as compared to Indian toilets.⁹

Indian toilets are good for pregnant women: Using Indian toilets benefit pregnant women as they have to squat while using them. There is no pressure on the uterus while a pregnant woman sits on the

Indian toilet. It is even said that using Indian toilet regularly makes pregnant women ready for a smooth and natural delivery.¹⁰

It can prevent colon cancer and other diseases:

Squatting helps in the complete evacuation of the stool from the colon in our body. This prevents the chances of constipation, appendicitis and other factors that can cause colon cancer.¹¹

Studies in favour of Squatting

One source of evidence that supports the benefits of squatting is from a Japanese study, "The Influence of Body Position on Defecation in Humans" published in the journal Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (LUTS). For the purposes of this study, three positions were tested:

- Sitting
- Sitting with the hip flexed at 60 degrees with respect to the rest of the body (sitting with feet raised)
- Squatting with the hip flexing at 22.5 degrees with respect to the rest of the body

For each position, researchers measured abdominal pressures, subtracted rectal pressures and anal sphincter pressures, and examined fluoroscopic images to compare the amount of strain required for elimination (i.e., defecation). Based on the results, the researchers concluded that "the greater the hip flexion achieved by squatting, the straighter the rectoanal canal will be, and accordingly, less strain will be required for defecation."¹²⁻¹⁵

In other words, the closer you are to a full squat, the easier it will be to poop.

In another study, "Comparison of Straining During Defecation in Three Positions: Results and Implications for Human Health" published in the Journal of Digestive Diseases and Sciences, Dr. Dov Sikirov had healthy volunteers ranging in age from 17 to 66 years old with normal bowel function use a digital timer to record the time needed for sensation of satisfactory elimination in three different positions:

- Sitting on a standard-sized toilet seat (41–42 cm high)
- Sitting on a lower toilet seat (31–32 cm high)
- Squatting

Six consecutive bowel movements were recorded in each position. The average time for satisfactory elimination during squatting was 51 seconds, compared to the average times for the lower and higher toilet seats: 114 and 130 seconds respectively. Participants were also asked to note their subjective impression of the intensity of effort. Based on the results, Dr. Sikirov concluded that "the sensation of satisfactory bowel emptying in sitting defecation posture necessitates excessive expulsive effort compared to the squatting posture."^{16,17}

A third study, “Role of defecation postures on the outcome of chronic anal fissure” involved patients with signs and symptoms of anal fissures — tears in the thin, moist tissue that lines the anus, typically from passing hard or large stools. Patients were evaluated before and after changing their defecation postures — sitting, squatting, or a modified sit/squat position. What these researchers concluded is that the modified posture — sitting with feet elevated — was best, better than both sitting and squatting, for reducing and almost totally eliminating chronic anal fissure.^{8,18}

CONCLUSION

Over the last few decades, bowel related diseases like hemorrhoids, appendicitis, constipation, irritable bowel syndrome have been on the rise especially in the western world due to several reasons including diet & lifestyle. That triggered a series of experiments and research studies in which scientists & doctors began to notice an interesting pattern. They noticed that the probability of such diseases was higher when one used the western toilet. Further research on this topic revealed that the seating position for western toilet was actually against human anatomy.

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