

# Health Awareness

## Tackle The Taboo About Sensitive Bowels For Better Well-being

by Heidi Brown, M.D., MAS,  
University of Wisconsin School of  
Medicine and Public Health,  
and

Kelly Lewis Brezoczky,  
Founder, Healthy Mature Living  
Foundation and ABLinfo.org



**Dr. Brown**

(NAPSA)—You might be surprised to learn this, but 30 million people experience sensitive bowels that cause accidental bowel leaks (ABL). Unfortunately, 70 percent do not talk about it even with their health care provider. This is too bad, because there are things anyone with ABL can do to reduce symptoms.

While there are plenty of myths surrounding this condition, the realities are important.

**Myth 1:** ABL affects only old people.

**Fact:** ABL affects over 30 million women and men. Research studies show that one in five women over the age of 40 experiences ABL—and that 70 percent of them experience it before the age of 60. Men are affected in similar numbers. While it's true the risk for developing ABL increases with age, the reality is it's an everyday health issue for millions of active people.

**Myth 2:** ABL is a normal part of aging.

**Fact:** Many common conditions are associated with ABL. The most common risk factors are digestive wellness-related health conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), chronic diarrhea, and Crohn's disease and colitis. Diabetes, obesity, childbirth, menopause and prostate therapy are also risk factors. In addition, certain medications, artificial



**Your doctor can help you overcome a possibly embarrassing condition.**

sweeteners and caffeine are associated with ABL. The reality is there are many conditions that can cause ABL; it's not just about aging.

**Myth 3:** There's nothing you can do about it.

**Fact:** Ninety percent of the time, ABL is light to moderate and can be managed with dietary and lifestyle changes. Learning how to use fiber to help improve stool consistency can help ward off ABL. Avoiding triggers and reducing caffeine, artificial sweeteners and spicy foods may also help. Learning how to do Kegel exercises, which strengthen pelvic floor muscles, may also be beneficial. When these dietary and lifestyle changes aren't enough, medical treatments are available. In all cases, talking to your health care provider is important.

ABL is a condition where making dietary and lifestyle choices can be empowering. Once people start taking steps to manage their symptoms, many will find their overall health and well-being improves.

• *Dr. Heidi Brown is Assistant Professor, Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery, at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. Kelly Lewis Brezoczky is Founder, Healthy Mature Living Foundation, ABLinfo.org and CEO Butterfly Health.*