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# 'Fecal Transplants' Show Promise for Gastrointestinal Ills



By **Amanda Gardner**

HealthDay Reporter | HealthDay – Tue, Nov 1, 2011 11:50 PM EDT

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TUESDAY, Nov. 1 (HealthDay News) -- They sound disgusting, but doctors say "fecal transplants" -- once shunned by the medical establishment -- are proving useful against a range of gastrointestinal ailments, new research says.

Presenting at the American College of Gastroenterology annual meeting in Washington, D.C., researchers report that the therapy can ease severe irritable bowel syndrome and nasty bacterial infections.

Fecal microbiota transplant (FMT) involves taking feces from a donor, typically a spouse or relative though it could be anyone, after a light colonoscopy prep.

That sample is then mixed "with some saline so that it's a consistency that can be aspirated into 60 cc syringes," explained Dr. Mark Mellow, one of the researchers presenting findings at the meeting.

The patient then undergoes a routine colonoscopy during which the mixture is inserted. The idea is that this new, transplanted population of healthy flora will correct the patient's underlying problem and it does seem to work.

Some of the most encouraging research comes in the form of three studies which demonstrated the procedure's effectiveness against recalcitrant infection with the bacterium *Clostridium difficile*. The bug can cause disabling and even life-threatening diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain.

"Patients who have multiple *C. difficile* recurrences have a totally different population of bacteria that normal people do," said Mellow, who is medical director of the Digestive Health Center at Integris Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City. "The key thing is a marked decrease in diversity so, instead of having tons of different strains of microorganisms, they have many less strains and species than many people do."

In Mellow's study, 98 percent of patients with *C. difficile* who hadn't responded to a mean of five previous treatment courses saw rapid resolution of their symptoms -- if not with the first FMT transplant, then with a second.

The patients had been suffering for a mean of 11 months and many were ill enough to be in acute-care or skilled nursing facilities or homebound, Mellow said.

Dr. David Bernstein, chief of gastroenterology at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, N.Y., said: "It seems that this is potentially a phenomenal treatment for *C. difficile* infection, especially those that are refractory. This works and it's dramatic how quickly it works.

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"*C. difficile* is becoming a greater problem in hospitals, and we're seeing more resistance and morbidity and mortality," he added.

Although it might seem difficult to find a volunteer, Bernstein felt that acceptance among patients would be high because "they've done so much already that has failed. They're desperate."

The transplants would not be first-line treatment for patients, however, Mellow said.

Researchers in Australia also reported success using FMT to treat ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease in three patients. In all cases, symptoms improved within days or weeks.

Other studies being presented at the meeting found effectiveness with probiotics, live "friendly bacteria" similar to those found naturally in the gut. The idea is similar to an FMT transplant but probiotics are generally sold as dietary supplements or come in foods such as yogurt.

### More information

The [Mayo Clinic](#) has more on *Clostridium difficile*.

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[Just Me, Richard](#) Yesterday

17 0

Sounds icky, but if it works, it works.

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[KO\\_oties](#) 2 days ago

13 0

This really sounds hopeful for those of us who suffer from GI issues. :)

[▶ 3 Replies](#)



[Make A Sentence](#) Yesterday

16 1

Hmmm...Close Encounters of the Terd Kind...

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[Myst](#) Yesterday

3 0

I have ulcerative colitis, and it's the worse thing ever when I had flare ups. I wouldn't wish UC on my worst enemy. My doctor told me I would have to take sulfur based pills daily for the rest of my life. I didn't like that idea.

After doing some research, I found the natural remedy of... [More](#)

[▶ 4 Replies](#)



[Fox Mulder](#) Yesterday

5 0

I've always wanted to be able to offer something to the world that would benefit humanity, and ease its pain and suffering. Imagine my shock to find I've been doing so all my life, but have been flushing it down the commode!

Donor with completely healthy digestive tract at your service!

[▶ 2 Replies](#)



[Shirlock](#) Yesterday

6 0

If you've ever #\$\$ every 13 minutes on the hour, every hour for any number of days, this doesn't sound so bad. I hope I get "good turd".

[▶ Reply](#)



[Kirstin](#) Yesterday

2 0

As gross as it sounds, this is showing remarkable promise. My main worries will be complications; I wonder if some sort of typing will need to happen as is done with blood transfusions and tissue transplants. Some way of ruling out a transplant from a normal person to a person with severe celiac... [More](#)

[▶ 2 Replies](#)

 Robert Yesterday 2   0  
Take good care of your gut bugs and they will take good care of you.  
[▶ 2 Replies](#)

 Christine Yesterday 9   2  
So that's why my dog eats the cat's #\$\$  
[▶ 5 Replies](#)

 De Yesterday 9   1  
#\$\$ happens  
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 Abhorrent Behavior Yesterday 2   0  
This is what the aliens have been doing!  
[▶ 1 Reply](#)

 Darren 12 hours ago 2   0  
This story is making me hungry....  
[▶ Reply](#)

 Stephen 22 hours ago 2   0  
My terds are really beautiful. I have never afforded a doctor, so these are pure.  
I would gladly sell them to the rich and donate them to the poor.  
[▶ Reply](#)

 DavidH 23 hours ago 2   0  
As a severe sufferer of UC and being forced to have my large intestine removed as a result - this could be the most exciting thing out there for our group. When I suffered (6 years ago) - there was so little research that it made me want to give up. As odd as this may sound - if it works - it works... [More](#)  
[▶ Reply](#)

 I'm Just A Bonehead Yesterday 2   0  
I'm not that character from king of the hill, but i do have a narrowed intestinal tract. Thank god we have Doctors who specialize in poop.  
[▶ Reply](#)

 Bill Yesterday 2   0  
We used to say that about good marijuana "this is some good #\$\$ man!"  
[▶ Reply](#)

 BonKeith Yesterday 5   2  
This is a new idea in the West, not in Southeast asia, The ayurveda medicine man has done for thousand years. Village medicine man usually took dry feces from healthy donor, powdered it and mixed with coconut juice and give to patients with regular irritated bowel distress. It works most of the time... [More](#)  
[▶ 6 Replies](#)

 BJones82 Yesterday 4   1  
Ever heard of probiotics? They come in pill form.  
[▶](#)

2 Replies



OOPS 19 hours ago

1 0

I am a transplant donor and will gladly let them harvest my doogies if it will save lives.

[▶ Reply](#)



OOPS 19 hours ago

1 0

I'd like this prescription filled please. OK... Would you like the generic #\$\$%\$ or name brand?

[▶ Reply](#)

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