

NIRAMAYA HOSPITALS

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28-year-old requires surgery after 45 days sans bowel movement

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Mumbai: A 28-year-old housewife from Chembur got a new lease of life after doctors surgically removed faecal matter that had choked her intestines following 45 days of constipation. The "football-sized" faecal mass had become life threatening and was on the verge of ripping off her large and small intestines when the doctors performed an emergen-

cy, two-hour surgery. Last week, Anusha (name changed) approached doctors at the Nova Specialty Surgery Centre in Chembur with constipation and vomiting complaints. The doctors were dumbfounded when she said the last time she had passed stools was towards the end of February. No references were found in medical literature about such a case; the longest documented duration of constipation was 10 days.

Called faecal impaction, the condition is usually seen in obese people or those bed-ridden for long. Anusha had a lean build, and her condition left her malnourished.

"Her intake had gone down, though she was not going empty stomach," said Dr Amit Thadhani, consulting general and laparoscopic surgeon at the Nova centre. "Her abdomen was bloated and was exerting pressure on other organs."

The faecal matter was stuck in an unusual part of the large intestine called sigmoid colon, just above rectum, and not in the rectum, as is commonly seen. Doctors had to make another opening to clear the blockage, which was a foot inside from the rectum opening. Thadhani said an endoscopic procedure called sigmoid colostomy was used to remove the blockage. Anusha was discharged on Thursday. Suspecting a psychological element to her inability to move her bowels for so long, Thadhani referred her to a psychiatrist.

FAECAL IMPACTION

- Ingested food is broken into smaller pieces by stomach muscles, following which it reaches small intestine
- After digestion, water, electrolytes and waste products reach large intestine
- By the time the residue reaches colon, nearly all water is absorbed, leaving behind stool
- Stool collects in the rectum until there is bowel movement
- In constipation cases, stool moves back into large intestine
- Faecal impaction can increase the size of intestine and put pressure on abdomen
- In extreme cases, faecal matter travels back to stomach and brings pressure on lungs and heart