

THE STRAITS TIMES

First 'poop transplants' done in Singapore

🕒 PUBLISHED MAY 7, 2014, 2:55 PM SGT



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A faeces transplant as a cure may sound odd, but some patients at the National University Hospital (NUH) have found it a welcome relief.

The hospital began doing the transplants in January this year, using healthy bacteria from a donor's faecal matter to restore patients' digestive systems to full health.

Typically, these patients have been on strong antibiotics which cure all but the most resistant gastrointestinal bacteria. The surviving bacterium can cause varied problems, ranging from frequent diarrhoea in mild cases to tears of the intestines and death.

NUH doctors say they see about 20 or 30 cases of such infections every month. Only about two-thirds respond to conventional treatment methods, and even then the problem may recur.

For the transplant, faecal matter is collected from a healthy donor and processed to get rid of unwanted material, leaving behind the "good bacteria". This is then inserted into the patient's body via either the mouth or the colon, which takes about half an hour.

While the transplant procedure is common overseas, NUH doctors say it hasn't caught on here due to the "yuck factor". But they hope to make it more widely accepted, as this form of treatment can help with other problems like irritable bowel syndrome.

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