



Bladder & Bowel UK

Supporting people with bladder and bowel problems

part of Disabled Living

Talk About Constipation



Information for children and families

This book has been designed to help young children understand about constipation and soiling (having poo accidents in your pants).

It explains why it happens and what can help things get better.

It is important to remember that if a child is soiling, they may have been constipated for many months without anyone knowing.

This problem can be treated, although it often takes a few weeks to work. Treatment should be continued for a long time (often more than 12 months) to stop the constipation and soiling happening again.

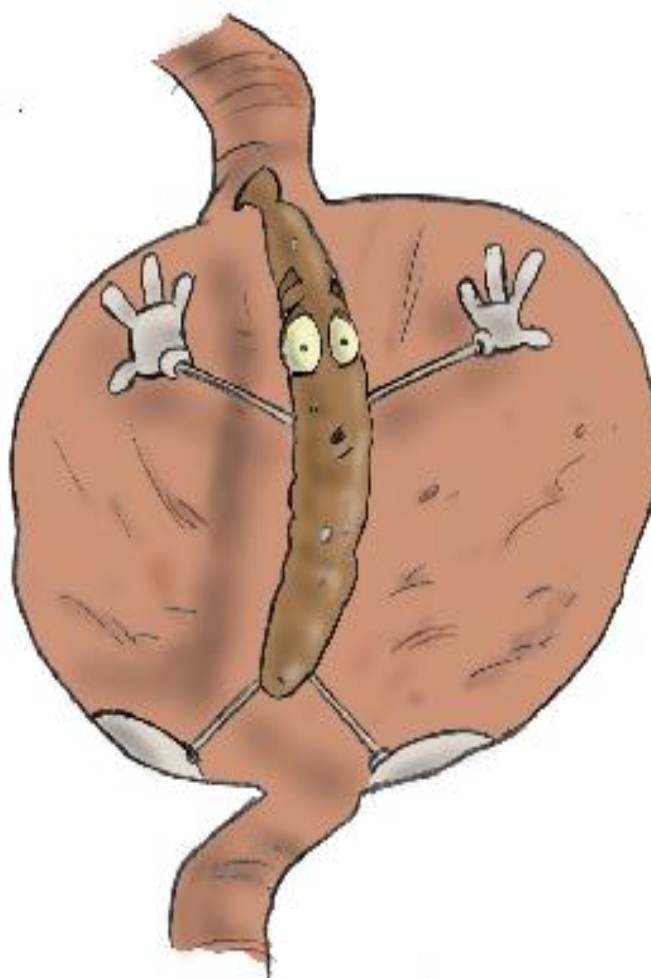


It is important to talk about the problem of constipation and soiling. Do not keep it a secret.

Where does poo come from?

Everybody needs to poo and wee. All your friends, your family and even famous people, such as footballers, and pop stars have to poo and wee.

When we eat there is always some parts of the food that our body does not need. Our body gets rid of this part of the food. That is our poo!



Poo sometimes gets 'stuck' in your bottom

What is 'constipation'?

Constipation means that you are not pooing often enough, or that your poos are smaller than they should be, or that your poo has become hard. Hard poo is difficult to push out and sometimes gets stuck inside. We need to do at least three poos every week and they should be soft. Constipation is sometimes called 'idiopathic' or 'functional' constipation. That means that no one knows what has caused the constipation.

How does constipation happen?

We do not always know why some people get constipated. However, we do know that poo can become hard if we are:

- Not eating enough fruit and vegetables
- Not drinking enough water-based drinks
- Not sitting on the toilet for long enough
- Putting off going to the toilet when we need to poo



Try to do a poo every day

How can I stop the soiling?

Poo that sits inside your bottom for longer than it should, can cause problems. Sometimes it leaks out. This is known as soiling. You might not notice it happening.

You can help this by:

- Taking medicine called 'laxatives'
- Make sure you sit on the toilet regularly: try to do a poo every day
- Sit on the toilet for about 5 – 10 minutes and try and relax and push the poo out
- Do not hold on if you feel you need to poo. Go straight to the toilet
- Have 6 – 8 water-based drinks every day
- Eat fruit and vegetables. You should have 5 – 7 portions each day
- Do not have more than one pint of milk a day (that includes in foods such as yoghurts or custards)
- Have lots of exercise



Constipation means that it is difficult for your poo to come out!

Why does the poo come out into my pants by itself?

When you get constipated the poo sits inside your bottom, instead of coming out into the toilet. This poo gets bigger and harder and eventually 'wedges' open the top bit of your bottom. This top bit of the bottom normally acts as a 'special door'. It keeps all your poo inside, until you sit on the toilet.

There is also a bendy bit at the end of your bowel, which helps to keep the poo inside. When you are constipated the poo sitting in your bottom keeps this bendy bit of your bowel straight, so that soft or squidgy poo from higher up can squeeze past into your pants. This can happen without you doing anything wrong. Soiling (poo leaking into your pants) is not your fault. You might not even realise that the poo has leaked. This soiling is caused by the constipation.



There are lots of things you can do to help constipation and soiling get better

What else can I do to help?

- Decide which time of day is the best time for you to sit on the toilet. Sit at this time every day and try and do a poo. After a meal is best.
- Keep a note of when you do a poo on the toilet so you can tell the person helping you to get better.
- Tell someone as soon as you know the poo has sneaked out into your pants. Get changed straight away, or your bottom might get sore.
- Work out with your mum, dad or carer (or whoever is looking after you) what you need to do with any pants that have 'sneaky poo' in them.



Poo wants to go in the toilet

Further advice

Always follow the advice given to you by your child's doctor or nurse. Talk to them if you have any concerns or questions.

You should always read the leaflet that comes with any medicine that has been prescribed for your child.

You may contact the **Bladder & Bowel UK confidential helpline** at email: bbuk@disabledliving.co.uk or Telephone: **0161 214 4591**

For further information about **Bladder & Bowel UK** services and resources visit our website at www.bbuk.org.uk

To see the full range of **Bladder & Bowel UK** information leaflets about children and young people's bladder and bowel issues visit <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/children-resources/>

There is a video about how to use macrogol laxatives at www.thepoonurses.uk

Further information

Bladder & Bowel UK have produced a range of leaflets providing more information:

Understanding Childhood Constipation

Understanding Constipation in Infants and Toddlers

Understanding Faecal Impaction

Understanding Macrogol Laxatives

Understanding the Management of Constipation and Faecal Impaction

These are all available to download from <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/children-resources/>

This booklet can be freely downloaded and printed as a whole. However, no part of this document may be copied or distributed without the authors' permission.

June Rogers MBE and Davina Richardson
 Copyright © Bladder & Bowel UK
 Disabled Living 2010 (fully revised and updated 2018, reviewed and amended 2020)
 Registered Charity No 224742

