Positive Thinking about Bowel movements in Children

Information Leaflet
Women and Children’s Division Children and Young People's Service
Introduction

Most children can control their bowels and are toilet trained by 4 years of age. Problems controlling bowel movements can cause soiling, which leads to frustration and anger on part of the child, parents, teachers and other people important in the child's life.

Some of the reasons for soiling are:
- problems during toilet training
- physical disabilities, which make it hard for the child to clean himself/herself
- physical condition, for example chronic constipation, Hirschprung’s Disease
- family or emotional problems

Soiling:
If it is not caused by a physical illness or disability it is called encopresis. Children with encopresis may have other problems, such as short attention span, low frustration tolerance, hyperactivity and poor coordination. Occasionally, the problem starts with a stressful change in the child's life.

Early Intervention:
Although most children with soiling do not have a physical condition, they should have a complete physical evaluation by their GP or Paediatrician. Early treatment of a soiling or bowel control problem can help prevent and reduce social and emotional pain for your child and family.

Toileting
Make the toilet a pleasant place to be e.g. warm, accessible height, tissues/wipes available. Going to the toilet after meals. Teach your child how to clean themselves and wash their hands – make it fun!

Your Feelings
✓ Be patient
✓ Be honest if you are struggling
✓ Share your feelings with others
✓ Keeping calm reduces your child's anxiety
✓ Don’t feel guilty
✓ Try not to loose your temper
Expectations
✓ Try without using nappies/absorbent pants.
✓ Look for any small signs of progress.
✓ Expect progress and accidents!!
✓ Be realistic about your goals
✓ Hard work and effort is required!
✓ Encourage sitting on the toilet, but DO NOT FORCE IT. If your child insists on using potty or nappy – encourage them to do so in the Toilet/bathroom
✓ Involve your child in emptying their stool down the toilet and flushing it away.

Bowel control
✓ Observe your child’s behaviour for signs of withdrawing prior to soiling – noting place and times
✓ When your child shows signs of withdrawing – that’s the time to take them to the toilet

Constipation
If your child has hard stool and complains of discomfort passing stool, increase their fluids, fruit and fibre consumption.
If the problem persists please see your GP.

Rewards
✓ Praise/reward improvements
✓ Be consistent
✓ No more than 10 minutes on the toilet
✓ Use communicational tools your child understands
✓ Involve you child in buying new pants etc.
✓ If necessary, break task down into small achievable steps

Help from others
Talk to your Community Nurse or Health Visitor who will be happy to help and advise you. Ensure your School Nurse is aware of any continence programme that you start
Please ask if school have resources/facilities readily available, Involve any respite care services.
Keep it POSITIVE
✓ Don’t blame your child or yourself.
✓ Don’t think you have failed
✓ Focus on improvements
✓ Plan a treat for yourself when things go well.

Resources

**Bladder & Bowel Foundation**: Offers advice on how to maintain a healthy bladder and bowel. It also offers advice to healthcare professionals: [https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/](https://www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org/)

**ERIC**: Provides information and resources to both parents and professionals around continence promotion in children. [http://www.eric.org.uk/](http://www.eric.org.uk/)

**Stopbedwetting**: Offers support to both patients and health care professionals to make informed decisions about childhood bedwetting. [http://www.stopbedwetting.org/](http://www.stopbedwetting.org/)

Support & Advice
Ask to speak with your School nurse if you need more information about toileting.
If your child is over 5 years old and has a learning disability and you need more help with toileting, ask a professional who knows you to refer to us.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?
Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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