

Encopresis is most commonly the result of chronic constipation. This makes passing stool difficult and painful. In response, children usually avoid going to the toilet and the stool remains in their colon. Over time the colon stretches and it becomes more challenging for the child to know when it is time to go to the toilet. When the colon becomes full, leakage usually occurs.

# ENCOPRESIS

Biological basis - elimination problems are due to genetic factors or to urinary or anorectal structural or functional abnormalities

Developmental basis - elimination disorders are part of a specific or general developmental delay

Treatment of choice is a multi-modal paediatric and psychological treatment programme involving psychoeducation (education), clearing the faecal mass (where there is overflow incontinence) and bowel retraining.

Behavioural basis - a lack of positive reinforcement for appropriate toileting or the association of toileting with pain or other aversive experiences prevent the development or maintenance of appropriate toileting habits

A bowel retraining programme may be followed, including routines for the following four areas:  
laxative use  
toileting  
accident management  
diet and exercise

Cleanliness training reinforces bowel control and requires children to take responsibility for managing the consequences of soiling. This includes changing their underwear and clothing after soiling. A reward chart is used to reinforce behaviour

Family systems basis - due to living in a chaotic family environment or from acute stressful life events and family lifecycle transitions. Elimination problems may be maintained by coercive, intrusive or triangulating interaction patterns with parents or caregiver

## ENCOPRESIS

### What is encopresis?

Encopresis is most commonly the result of chronic constipation. This makes passing stool difficult and painful for the child. In response, the child usually avoids going to the toilet and the stool remains in their colon. Over time the colon stretches and it becomes more challenging for the child to know when it is time to go to the toilet. When the colon becomes full, leakage and overflow usually occurs.

### How can encopresis affect a child

- It can be a frustrating condition for the child and their family
- It can be uncomfortable when a child is being helped and changed by different people
- It can be embarrassing for a child to regularly have to leave the classroom/an activity
- It can be a cause of anxiety for the child
- It can have social impacts on the child
- It can be tiring and exhausting for the child and their family

### How you can help?

- Be aware and be informed.
- Avoid judgement. Encopresis is not a choice
- Be empathetic. If having a child with encopresis in your care is challenging for you imagine how challenging it is for them
- Work with the child and their family to identify how best to manage the condition in the classroom and in the yard
- Educate and inform other students. Children will be curious as to why the child is leaving the classroom several times a day and where they are going. Collaborate with the child and their family to formulate a sensitive and consistent response.
- Do not tolerate name-calling or bullying
- Be consistent with your tone and approach to the child.
- There will be times when the child requires your help with changing during inconvenient times. It is important to remain calm and positive so that the child does not feel as though they are an inconvenience or a burden
- Highlight the child's strengths beyond their cooperation with their condition. The child is more than their encopresis

If you would like to learn more about encopresis visit these websites

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/health-daily-care/toileting/faecal-incontinence>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/encopresis.html>

