








Patient information

Helping your child with constipation and soiling difficulties



Bristol Stool Chart for Children: Choose your Poo

Type 1		Looks like: Rabbit droppings Separate hard lumps. (Hard to pass)
Type 2		Looks like: Bunch of grapes Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3		Looks like: Corn on the cob Like a sausage but cracked on the surface
Type 4		Looks like: Sausage Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
Type 5		Looks like: Chicken nuggets Soft blobs with clear-cut edges. (Passed easily)
Type 6		Looks like: Porridge Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7		Looks like: Gravy Watery, no solid pieces entirely liquid

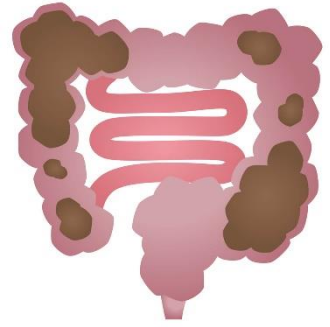
Constipation is a common problem for children. If left untreated or not managed effectively it can lead to discomfort, soiling difficulties and health complications.

It is helpful to keep track of your child's poo. Most children, on average, poo four times per week. It should look like type 4.

Lewis SJ, Heaton KW (1997) Stool form scale as a useful guide to intestinal transit time. Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology 32: 920-4

Why does it go wrong?

When we eat, our food travels to our stomach and then goes to our small bowel where the nutrients are processed. It then goes to the large bowel where there are strong muscles to squeeze the poo along to the rectum in order to go to the toilet.



The messages telling us we need a poo are sent when the rectum stretches. However, if too much poo builds up, the rectum is constantly stretched and can't detect the signal when we need to go. Soft and watery poo can sometimes leak around the hard lumps and this is the overflow or soiling.

If we can't rely on the messages to tell us when we need a poo then we need to have a regular routine of sitting on the toilet.

Help your child to get the poo in the loo!

Your child will likely need laxative medicine to ensure the constipation is resolved. This will be prescribed by your child's paediatrician. However, children who have had difficulty with constipation and soiling often find it hard to recognise when they need to sit on the toilet. It can take time to retrain the bowel and it is important to get a good routine in place. Some children will have experienced discomfort or pain from their constipation and may feel anxious about using the toilet, therefore, it is important to make the toilet a more pleasant and positive place.

1. Aim to get your child to sit on the toilet for five minutes after every meal and before bed. This makes the most of the natural squeeze we get after eating.
2. Make sure your child's feet are supported on a box or stool. Knees should be above the hips with a secure sitting position. It can be helpful to get a child's toilet seat.
3. Often a good time for children to sit on the toilet is after a bath when the muscles are warm and relaxed. You can help them to relax more by massaging the tummy in clockwise circles.
4. To help your child recognise the pushing of our tummy muscles, you can get them to blow bubbles, a balloon or a party blower. This is fun too!
5. Make it fun: your child needs to view the toilet as a positive and calm place. You can offer them a book, magazine, toy or music whilst they sit on the toilet.



6. Give your child lots of verbal praise for sitting on the toilet. Reward the sitting rather than the pooing itself: your child won't poo every time. Ideas for rewarding your child can include a sticker chart or you can reward them with extra play time or story time.
7. Make sure your child is drinking plenty of water. This helps the medication to work, which will make the stool soft and easy to pass.
8. Be patient, and don't tell your child off. It can take lots of practice for your child to get the poo in the loo, particularly after constipation difficulties.

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<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>

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