

How to have Healthy Bladder and Bowels

Information and advice for children and their parents

Sandwell Children's Continence Service

Bladder and bowel problems in school aged children are fairly common. You're not alone, it's no-one's fault and with a little bit of guidance many issues can be resolved.

The following information will be a helpful reminder and will give you some advice of things to consider before your child is referred for further assessment by the Children's Continence Team.

In order for the bladder and bowel to work properly there are a number of things to consider:

- Encourage your child to listen to their body and use the toilet when they need to. This will encourage the muscles in the bladder to stretch and squeeze appropriately. Regular toilet breaks are needed as part of your child's daily routine. This is important for the bladder to be able to work properly. If your child needs a reminder to use the toilet a watch or phone alarm may be a good way to remind them to go. This is also important during the school day so discuss this with your child's teacher and agree on a plan for when your child is at school.
- Create an inviting toilet environment with some of your child's favourite things- for example let your child choose a few toys, a book, a fun activity, a reward for sitting on the toilet or their favourite hand soaps.
- If your child still wears a nappy or pull ups for bed encourage them to change in the bathroom and to be involved in the whole process including choosing their underwear and clothing and putting dirty clothes in the washing. Always remember to promote good hygiene skills including wiping effectively and washing hands properly.
- Your child should feel comfortable when using the toilet and depending on their age and ability be encouraged to meet their toileting needs themselves. Bladders and bowels empty more effectively in a sitting position therefore boys should also be encouraged to sit to use the toilet. Feet should be flat and ideally a stool or box should be used so that your child's knees are above their hips. Appropriate privacy should also be maintained for your child's dignity.
- Constipation can cause problems with the bladder as if the bowel is full it can press against the bladder and send mixed messages to your child and cause daytime/night-time wetting. If your child is passing hard poo, soiling in their underwear or going to the toilet less than 4 times a week please discuss this with your GP. Sitting on the toilet 20-30 minutes after meals and before bed can be really helpful to encourage children to open their bowels.
- Urinary Tract Infections- UTI's can cause problems with continence so if your child has tummy ache, smelly or cloudy wee and is generally not feeling very well please speak to your GP.

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- Exercise plays an important part in keeping all parts of your child healthy, including their bladder and bowel- all 5-18 year olds should take part in activities which raise their heartbeat for at least one hour every day. Encourage your child to be active and promote a healthy lifestyle by setting good examples and taking part in healthy activities together whenever possible.

Food and Drinks for a Healthy Bladder and Bowel

Food

- Your child's diet should contain a mixture of foods from each of the basic food groups including:
 - Meat, fish, poultry, eggs
 - Milk, cheese and other dairy products
 - Fruit and vegetables
 - Cereals, potatoes, rice and pasta
- Your child should be encouraged to eat a balanced diet containing lots of different tastes and textures and at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.
- Children should not be eating large amounts of high fibre food for example, bran cereals or unprocessed bran but should be encouraged to eat wholegrain cereals, pasta and rice as part of their diet.
- Do not add salt or sugar to your child's meals. Many foods already contain enough salt and sugar.

Drinks

- Drinking the right amount of fluids is very important to help with bowel and bladder problems. Please ensure that your child is drinking the required amounts.
- Water is always the best drink but well diluted fruit juice or squash can also be given along with a couple of glasses of milk during the day.
- Drinks to be avoided are tea, coffee, blackcurrant juice and drinks that contain caffeine including fizzy drinks like cola.
- Do not limit your child's fluid intake- this will not help with toilet training as children need to drink enough fluids in order for their bladder to fill and empty properly.

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- Children also need to drink enough fluids for their bowels to behave properly and prevent constipation
- If your child is struggling to drink the recommended daily amounts of fluid encourage them whilst explaining the reasons for needing to drink enough of the right fluids. Use preferred cups/glasses/sports bottles, measure out the required amount for the day and spread drinks out during the day. Aim for your child to have consumed half of their daily intake of fluids by midday.

Daily recommended fluid intake:

4-8 years	Female	1000-1400ml
	Male	1000-1400ml
9-13 years	Female	1200-2100ml
	Male	1400-2300ml
14-18 years	Female	1400-2500ml
	Male	2100-3200ml

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Further Information

ERIC The children's bowel & bladder charity. Available at:
www.eric.org.uk (Accessed: 01 March 2024).

Bladder & bowel UK. Available at: <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/> (Accessed: 01 March 2024).

National Health Service (2018) Potty training and bedwetting. Available at: www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development/potty-training-and-bedwetting/ (Accessed: 01 March 2024).

National Health Service (2020) Soiling (child pooing their pants). Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/soiling-child-pooing-their-pants/> (Accessed: 01 March 2024).

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