

Encopresis - Waiting Too Long Type

Definition

- Stool leakage (soiling) in a child who is toilet trained.
- The medical name for stool soiling is encopresis.
- Most days your child is clean and gets all poops in the toilet.
- Some days your child soils underwear while running to the bathroom.
- The amount is usually small.

Health Information

Cause

- Trying to delay going to the toilet is a common cause of soiling in preschoolers.
- They wait for the last minute to respond to the sensation of a full rectum.
- They are preoccupied with friends, games, videos, or toys. They don't want to take a bathroom break. They would rather "play than poop".

Importance of Treating This Behavior

- Holding back stools can become a harmful habit.
- It can turn into constipation or even stool blockage.

Care Advice

1. Key Points

- Young children who are toilet trained can sometimes soil their underwear.
- The main cause is waiting too long after they feel the urge to go.
- Sometimes they soil themselves while running to the bathroom.
- This type of behavior is uncommon after 6 years old.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Put Your Child in Charge

- Tell him his job: "Pay better attention to your body. When the poop wants to come out, go to the bathroom right away. Don't make the poop wait".
- Put your child in charge of getting better.
- Keep your child in underwear.
- Set your child up to succeed.

3. Stop all Reminders About Using the Toilet

- Your child knows what to do. There is nothing left to teach. Let incentives and privileges do your talking.
- Reminders and lectures are a form of pressure. Pressure does not work.
- Pressure will only lead to control issues and power struggles.

4. Use Incentives to Motivate Your Child

- Give a special incentive for going poop without any prior leakage.
- Examples are extra game time, screen time, star chart or even food treats.
- Give lots of hugs throughout the day. Reason: remind your child how much you love them and support them.

5. Give Consequences for Soiling

- When soiling occurs, tell your child you know they are sorry for waiting too long. Be kind.
- But help them learn from their mistake. Give a logical consequence.
- Remove whatever your child was playing with or doing when they soiled themselves. Remove it for the rest of that day.
- Example: no more screen time for today.
- Absolutely avoid any physical punishment for stool leakage.

6. Require Your Child to Change Into Clear Underwear

- When your child is soiled, tell your child they must change into clean underwear and clothing. In most cases, you will need to help them.
- Do this right away. Reason: Sitting in poopy underwear does not teach your child anything.
- It also gives a mixed message, that wearing soiled clothing doesn't really matter.

Call Your Doctor If

- Passing stools becomes painful
- Constipation occurs (3 days or longer between stools)
- Soiling becomes more frequent
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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