

2. Record Keeping

- It can be helpful to keep track of your child's daily pooping habits. The information you collect can help you notice patterns to figure out the best time for your child to have their scheduled sits throughout the day. It can also help you decide when some sits can be removed (e.g., if your child never poops after breakfast, take this sit out of the schedule).
- When your child sits on the toilet to try to poop, write down:
 - If they took medicine to help them poop that day, if they have a poop on the toilet, the time and what the poop looked like
- Also keep track of the timing/location of any accidents throughout the day (see a sample chart to the right).
- Avoid punishing for accidents. Many children with bowel problems have reduced sensation of the urge to go, and feel embarrassed about having accidents. Also, stress can make the problem worse.
- Some parents say that it seems that their children don't notice when they have had an accident, but others have. When bowel problems have been going on for a long time, some children can become "nose blind" to the smell of accidents. If you notice that your child may have had an accident, encourage them to check with their their eyes, and to change clothing if necessary.

Medicine	How much?	Monday	Tuesday	Wed	Thursday	Friday	Sat.	Sunday
Sat on Toilet	After breakfast							
	After lunch							
	After school							
	After supper							
BMI today?	Time?							
	Small, med, or large?							
	Rummy, soft, Time?							
Accident?								

3. Rewards

- Most children with bowel problems have had negative experiences with trying to have a poop on the toilet (pain, frustration), and/or would rather be doing anything else than sitting on the toilet. It can be helpful to give small rewards (e.g., stickers) for sitting cooperatively when told to 'go try' and/or for having a poop on the toilet. In addition to praise, some children may respond to getting to do a preferred activity after sitting on the toilet (for example, electronic time, going outside); others may respond to earning points towards a larger reward. Rewards can also be used to encourage medication taking, or getting changed after an accident, if these are areas where your child resists.

How to help your child with ...

Constipation



Pediatric Health Psychology

IWK Health Centre

Phone: 902-470-8406

Fax: 902-470-8736

Constipation

- Many children have problems with bowel movements, or pooping. Common challenges include having poop that is large, hard or painful to pass when using the toilet; having poop accidents (called encopresis); avoiding the toilet; and trying to hold in poop. For many children and parents, bowel problems have been going on for a long time and can feel stressful or embarrassing.
- It is important that a healthcare provider (e.g., family doctor, nurse practitioner, or pediatrician) is involved in managing your child's bowel problems. While it is rare that these challenges are caused by something serious, there are certain issues that should be ruled out. Also, children with chronic constipation almost always need medicine to help treat their bowel issues, and this should be taken under the supervision of a healthcare provider.
- **Constipation** is a common cause of bowel problems. Constipation happens when poop builds up in the bowel (also called the intestine or colon). While some children who are constipated will go many days without having a poop, it is important to know that a child can be constipated even if they are having a poop every day. Constipation can lead to hard or painful poops, poop leakage (due to soft poop leaking around hardened poop that is backed up in the bowel), and avoidance of the toilet. Some children with severe constipation have very large bowel movements that clog the toilet. Your child's healthcare provider might suggest doing a "clean out" of the poop that is built up in their bowel using medication that makes the poop softer and/or helps your child to push it out.

At Home Strategies

There are some strategies parents can use at home to help their child have healthy bowel habits. These strategies are beneficial for children with and without constipation. Below are some suggestions and ideas for troubleshooting.

Managing bowel problems is often a long-term journey. Persistence and consistency are key! When reviewing to strategies below, remember that it will be important to meet your child where he or she is at, and set goals that are appropriate for them. For some children, changes may focus on taking some small steps initially (e.g., sitting on the toilet for a short amount of time), and working towards bigger goals.

1. Scheduled Toilet Sits

- Having a routine of scheduled times to sit on the toilet throughout the day can help children have poops on a regular basis. Many children with bowel problems are less able to feel the urge that they need to poop (often because backed up poop has stretched the bowels leading to decreased sensation). Having scheduled times to sit on the toilet can help reduce accidents by making sure that children use the toilet before it is too late, and can help keep poops soft and easy to pass.
- It is common to poop about 20 minutes after a meal, so after breakfast, lunch, and supper are often good times to schedule regular toilet sits.
- Some children do not like sitting on the toilet after lunch if they are at school. It is okay to try a schedule without a lunch sit if this will be the case for your child. You will know that an after lunch sit may be necessary if your child is having accidents during the school day, or on the way home from school.
- Scheduled toilet sits tend to work best if they fit into your child's daily routine (for example, eat breakfast, get dressed, brush teeth, sit on toilet; come home from school, have snack, do homework, sit on toilet, go out to play). Most children will need prompts from an adult to use the toilet at the scheduled time.
- A timer set for 5 minutes can help your child to stay on the toilet long enough to relax and poop, but not so long that they get bored or frustrated.
- Some children enjoy having an activity to do while sitting on the toilet. While a quiet activity (like a book or iPad) may be helpful to encourage them to stay seated, it is important to make sure that they do not become too distracted by the activity and are still focused on having a poop.
- When your child is sitting on the toilet, use a stool if necessary to ensure that their knees are slightly higher than their hips. This makes pooping easier.
- **If your child has not had a bowel clean out and/or has not pooped for a number of days, it will probably not be useful to have him/her sit on the toilet and may lead to frustration.** In these situations, consult your healthcare provider about potential medications that may be needed.
- If your child is having a lot of difficulty sitting on the toilet, it can be helpful to choose one time of the day during which you are able to support your child through the toilet sit, despite the challenges (e.g., evenings tend to be a better time for many families as there are less schedule restrictions). Once your child has some successes, you can add on additional sits.