



Encopresis

What is encopresis?

Encopresis is a bowel problem in children typically between the ages of 5 and 12. These children are old enough to be toilet-trained but still have bowel movements in their underclothes. Because these children are resisting the urge to use the toilet, large amounts of fecal matter accumulates in the rectum and lower intestine, and a liquid material that may contain mucous passes by the blockage and out of the body. The liquid may or may not contain some fecal matter. Many children do not feel the release of this liquid because the nerve sensation in the intestinal walls have decreased. In addition, the intestinal walls have lost their ability to squeeze and push the fecal matter out. It becomes more and more difficult for the child to have a bowel movement.

Encopresis can also happen as a result of an emotional event (upset over bad grade, argument between parents, death of a pet).

How is it treated?

- Take your child to his health care provider to make sure there are no hidden health problems.
- Enemas or suppositories can be given to clear the rectum and lower intestine. Your health care provider may be able to do this in the office, but it is usually done at home if the child and parent can agree to it. Rarely does the child need to be hospitalized.
- Once at home, attempt to establish regular times to use the toilet in conjunction with the use of laxatives or stool softeners recommended by your child's health care provider.
- Encourage your child to drink fluids and eat high-fiber foods.
- Be emotionally supportive.

For more information contact Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or www.myguilford.com