

Additional Message to Parents/Carers:

Here is some of the standard advice we use about constipation:

- The function of the colon is to remove water. Constipation causes more constipation, because the constipated poo is held up in the colon, more water gets removed so the poo gets even bigger and harder.
- When the rectum and sigmoid colon has got a bit stretched up, with loads of hard poo, you can end up with different problems - like overflow soiling- dark gritty grainy poo that can leak constantly with no sensation. Stool holding, fear of pooing, avoidance of pooing or massive infrequent poos.
- It's relatively easy to empty out all the poo - you just need to use a large enough dose of laxative. However, since the bowel is stretched from having been constipated, it is easy for the bowels to fill up again with hard poo. You can end up in a vicious cycle where a family are using the bare minimum of laxative which means the child passes a huge painful poo every few days.
- Therefore you need to be generous with the doses of medicine. You need to get the poos almost to the point of runniness, and then cut back the dose of medicine just a little bit and slowly so that you can find the right maintenance dose.
- After you have cleared out the bowel (disimpacted) you need to keep it cleared out. That doesn't mean giving the child loose poo forever, but it does mean even being a bit obsessed with avoiding constipation for a long time after. React with an extra sachet or two if your child has not passed a poo for 36-48 hours. Even years after the recovery from constipation it's a good idea for a family to have a few sachets of Movicol in a 'break glass in case of emergency' place.
- You can often need to treat with laxatives for twice as long as the child had the constipation in the first place.
- Once the child feels a bit better on the medicine, then you can improve fluid intake and add some roughage to the diet. These are hard things to do when a child is very constipated - and do not usually treat the constipation if it has got really bad.
- The actual dose of medicines a child ends up on is less important than giving them enough so that they're having soft poos. In this sense, it's very different indeed from using, say, paracetemol where we always adhere to the dose guidelines. With Macrogol or Lactulose, the only side effect is loose poo. You can't get addicted, and it will not cause a 'lazy bowel.'
- Some children who are using senna or pico sulphate can get cramps

The more generous you are with the dose, the better the child recovers. I admire parents who want to avoid medicines in their children, but this is a situation where avoidance worsens things. You can guarantee that a child will be on a macrogol 'forever' if you are giving a very constipated child half a sachet of movicol a day; it's the generous doses that keep things moving that give the bowel a chance to recover. It will **really** help to watch our video www.thepoonurses.uk/ about how to use a macrogol.

What does healthy poo look like?

1



Looks Like:
Rabbit droppings

2



Looks Like:
Bunch of grapes

3



Looks Like:
Corn on the cob

4



Looks Like:
Sausage

5



Looks Like:
Chicken Nuggets

6



Looks Like:
Porridge

7



Looks Like:
Gravy