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# Bowel Incontinence

**Also called:** **Encopresis, Fecal incontinence, Stool soiling**

Bowel incontinence is the inability to control your bowels. When you feel the urge to have a **bowel movement** [<https://medlineplus.gov/bowelmovement.html>] , you may not be able to hold it until you get to a toilet. Millions of Americans have this problem. It affects people of all ages - children and adults. It is more common in women and older adults. It is not a normal part of aging.


Causes include:

- Constipation [<https://medlineplus.gov/constipation.html>]
- Damage to muscles or nerves of the anus and rectum
- Diarrhea [<https://medlineplus.gov/diarrhea.html>]
- Pelvic floor disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/pelvicfloordisorders.html>]

Treatments include changes in diet, medicines, bowel training, or surgery.

*NIH: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases*


## Start Here

- Accidental Bowel Leakage [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/accidental-bowel-leakage>]  
(American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- Bowel Control Problems (Fecal Incontinence) [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/digestive-diseases/bowel-control-problems-fecal-incontinence>]  (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/informacion-de-la-salud/enfermedades-digestivas/incontinencia-fecal>]
- Fecal Incontinence [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/fecal-incontinence/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)  
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/incontinencia-fecal-es/?adfree=true>]

## Symptoms

- Symptoms of Incontinence [<https://aboutincontinence.org/signs-and-symptoms/symptoms-of-incontinence/>]  
(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

## Diagnosis and Tests

- Stool Diary [[https://www.niddk.nih.gov/-/media/Files/Weight-Management/Stool\\_Diary\\_508.pdf](https://www.niddk.nih.gov/-/media/Files/Weight-Management/Stool_Diary_508.pdf)]  
 (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases) - **PDF**

## Treatments and Therapies

- Bowel Retraining: Strategies for Establishing Bowel Control [<https://aboutconstipation.org/treatment/bowel-retraining/>]  
(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

• **Cecostomy** [<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/cecostomy-for-children>]

(Johns Hopkins Medicine)

• **Incontinence Treatment: Biofeedback** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/treatment/biofeedback/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

• **Incontinence Treatment: Medication** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/treatment/medication/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

• **Incontinence Treatment: Newer Treatment Options** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/treatment/newer-treatment-options/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

• **Incontinence Treatment: Surgical Treatments** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/treatment/surgical-treatments/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

## Living With

• **Incontinence Treatment: Dietary Tips** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/treatment/dietary-tips/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

## Clinical Trials

• **ClinicalTrials.gov: Encopresis** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Encopresis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]

 (National Institutes of Health)

## Journal Articles

**References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)**


• **Article: Biofeedback rehabilitation in children with encopresis due to retentive constipation using...**  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/39725455>]

• **Article: The impact of antegrade continence enemas on bladder function in patients...**  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/37516581>]

• **Article: Enuresis and encopresis: Association with child abuse and neglect.**  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/36057483>]

• **Bowel Incontinence -- see more articles** [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Encopresis%22%5Bmajr%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+>]

## Find an Expert

• **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases** [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>] 

## Children

• **Fecal Incontinence in Children** [<https://aboutincontinence.org/what-is-incontinence/fecal-incontinence-in-children/>]

(International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders)

• **Soiling (Encopresis)** [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/encopresis.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

## Older Adults

• **Fecal Incontinence** [<https://www.healthinaging.org/a-z-topic/fecal-incontinence>] (AGS Health in Aging Foundation)

## Patient Handouts

• **Bowel incontinence** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003135.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003135.htm>]

• **Encopresis** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001570.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001570.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Bowel incontinence [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003135.htm>]

Bowel retraining [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003971.htm>]

Encopresis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001570.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Anal Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/analdisorders.html>]

Bowel Movement [<https://medlineplus.gov/bowelmovement.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Bowel Incontinence* is the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases [<https://www.niddk.nih.gov>]

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