



Healthy Schools

How you can support your pupils around bladder and bowel issues: Tips for Primary and Secondary Schools in Swindon

Why is this important?

- 1.5mn children and young people (CYP) in the UK are affected by urinary and or faecal continence problems [1].
- Failure to identify and treat continence problems at an early stage can give rise to chronic changes in the kidneys, bladder or bowel [1].
- Experiencing hard stools in early childhood is a risk factor for later problems with constipation [1].
- Faecal and urinary incontinence is distressing, unpleasant and socially disruptive.
- It can destroy self-esteem, and increase anxiety and depression.
- It can damage relationships with family and friends.
- It can lead to bullying and school non-attendance, effecting educational achievement and employment prospects.
- It can restrict educational and leisure opportunities. CYP may miss out on school trips, sports days and sleepovers.
- It can lead to extra laundry and purchasing costs for families.

What schools can do

- 1) Encourage staff to attend the forthcoming free bladder and bowel online training:**

Wednesday 20 November, 9.15-11am. Swindon secondary schools.

Book here: <https://hubforeducation.swindon.gov.uk/Event/244809>

Wednesday 20 November, 3.15-5pm. Swindon primary schools:
<https://hubforeducation.swindon.gov.uk/Event/244811>

2) Do not ban toilet breaks

Like many adults, CYP might not only need the toilet only at set times like playtime and lunchtime and so there needs to be a certain amount of flexibility for them to go outside these set times. Banning toilet breaks during lessons or restricting access to the toilets can aggravate or even create continence problems.

Consequences can include:

- soiling and wetting accidents in the classroom
- urinary tract infections
- withholding, which can lead to constipation
- CYP reducing the amount they eat or drink in the mistaken belief that this will stop them needing to use the toilet
- dehydration and lack of concentration
- general anxiety around using the toilet away from home
- for small children it may negatively affect their ability to learn to use the loo.

3) Improve school toilets

The condition of toilets at school can be a key factor in how willing CYP are to use them. It is important that CYP should be able to use toilet facilities that are clean and feel safe. Open, bright and attractive toilets will encourage pupils to value themselves and their facilities. If possible, provide male, female and gender neutral toilets.

Consider whether:

- the toilets are clean and smell nice and if the cleaning/inspection regime is effective
- there is sufficient toilet paper in each cubicle at a convenient height
- soap at the sinks is well stocked
- hot water from mixer taps is available
- the taps work. Do they splash when CYP use them?
- the hand-dryers are too loud (some CYP might feel anxious about this)
- the toilet door locks are easy to use
- the flushes are in good condition and easy to use

- period products are available
- there are adequate numbers of facilities
- facilities provide enough privacy
- toilets are properly equipped, for users with additional needs
- lighting, ventilation, fixtures and fittings are adequate.

4) Issue toilet passes

If a pupil has an identified continence issue, they should be given a 'toilet card' or similar that allows them to go to the toilet when they need to.

5) Develop a school toilet policy which is shared with all staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers

A written school toilet policy:

- indicates to pupils and parents/carers that the school values and respects the welfare of its pupils by fulfilling their right to go when they need to
- shows that all school staff follow the same approach to the access of school toilets
- means pupils know when they can use the toilet and aren't left worrying whether they'll be told off if they ask to go during a lesson
- encourages schools to audit the toilets properly so they don't deteriorate.

Pupils should be actively involved in creating, implementing and approving the policy.

Eric, the children's bowel and bladder charity, has created a template school toilet policy. Download the [template school toilet policy](https://eric.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Toilets-and-school-readiness.pdf).

6) Circulate the following factsheet to parents and carers of new starters (primary schools): <https://eric.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Toilets-and-school-readiness.pdf>

7) Support pupils to be well hydrated

Provide open access to water throughout the day for all learners.

Teach about the importance of hydration in PSHE and other lessons.

Further links

Evidence on why it is important to prioritise preventing bladder and bowel issues and supporting CYP with bladder and bowel issues:

<https://eric.org.uk/about/the-evidence-base/>

Eric school toilet charter: <https://eric.org.uk/school-toilet-charter/>

Training and resources for professionals:

<https://eric.org.uk/professionals/>

The legislation that covers school toilets and washing facilities is the Schools Premises and Regulations (SPRs) 2012:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1943/contents/made

References

[1] Paediatric Continence Forum (2024).

Children's Continence Commissioning Guide: www.bbuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PCF-Childrens-Continence-Commissioning-Guide-2024.pdf

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