

spina bifida

Passport to success

Medical treatment of constipation and diarrhoea

Are there any drugs that can be used to control stool consistency?

Yes. Drugs can sometimes be used to control stool consistency, but should only be used for a limited period of time. Long term use of drugs may have a damaging effect on bowel functions.

Expert advice should be consulted before taking any drugs. Do not go to the chemist without seeing your doctor or continence nurse.



There are four types of drugs prescribed:

- laxatives (to deal with constipation)
- bulk forming agents (making your stools bigger)
- stool softeners (softening your stools)
- stool hardeners (hardening your stools).

What are the best techniques to assist with bowel emptying?

There are many techniques and methods for emptying bowels ranging from normal toileting to sophisticated surgical techniques. Most of you will have had extensive toileting experience.

Establishing a bowel emptying routine

Effective bowel management involves a system for bowel emptying at regular intervals, at least every 24 hours. For example, you could associate the timing of bowel emptying with meals, baths, and physical activities. A particular time of day can help establish predictable continence patterns.

Anal/rectal stimulation

Sometimes anal/rectal stimulation to promote bowel emptying can be achieved by wiping the anus firmly with toilet paper as soon as you sit. If the stool is not being expelled, slight pressure can be applied with the fingers to each side of the anus.

Digital stimulation involves inserting a gloved finger into the anus and massaging to stimulate a contraction to eliminate a stool.

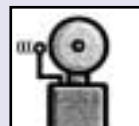
Suppositories and microenemas

Most enemas and suppositories are special fluids squirted or placed into the anus. They assist to irrigate the bowel and wash out the stools. They assist particularly where you have reduced ability to push out the stools.

Large volume wash outs

If other methods do not work, large volume enemas also called 'colonic washouts' may be required to wash out the bowel. The amount and type of fluid is determined by the specialist clinic, and may include solutions of salty water; soap and water; or other solutions. The enema is administered by using a bowel washout kit. Make sure you get assistance from your continence nurse, and regularly review your technique at regular check-up visits.

Care must be taken not to use rubber catheters for those with latex allergies.

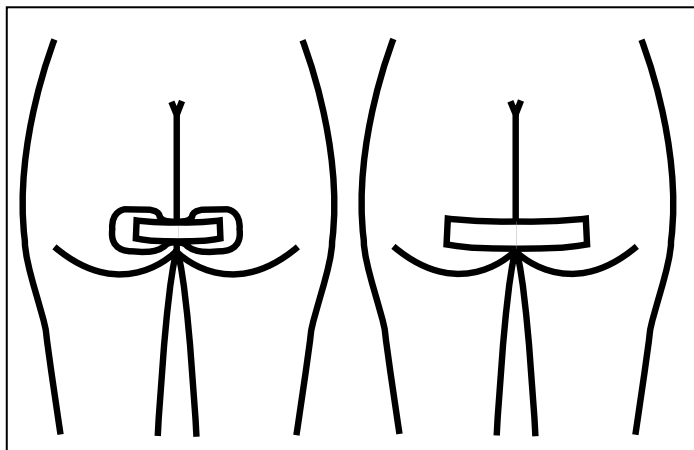


A large volume washout will clear the bowel for up to three days. The main problem is that you will probably need help to administer it. This of course means you are not as independent as you would like to be.

Are there any other procedures that may help with bowel incontinence?

Yes. Buttock strapping is a possibility. This provides a bit of extra assistance to your anus to hold in stools. However, this technique will not work when the stools are soft, or when there is diarrhoea. Strapping can be used when swimming, on special outings or even most of the time.

Try different types of tapes to ensure that they are waterproof or that no adverse reactions will occur. Typically used tapes include elastic adhesive tapes, nonallergenic tapes, waterproof adhesive and even electrician's tape.



Buttock strapping