

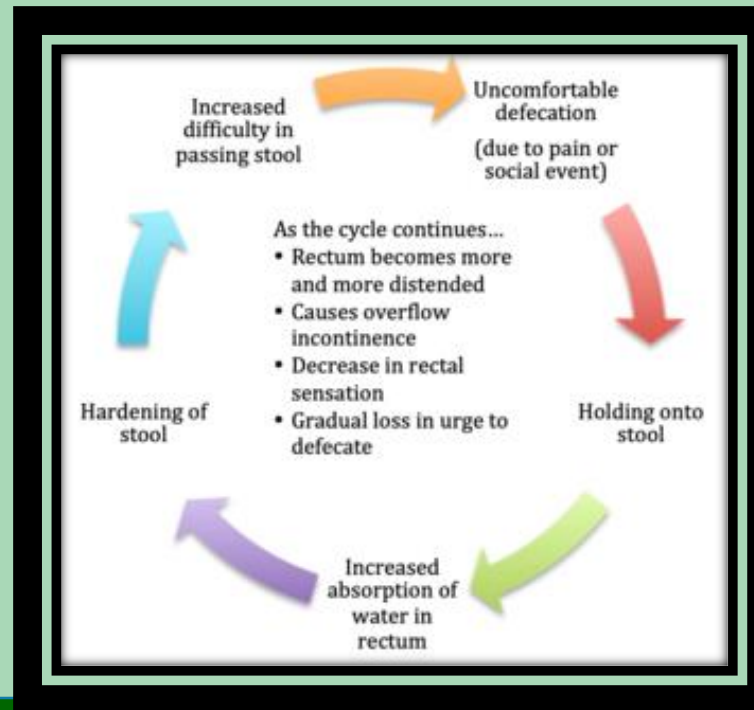


Understanding Overflow Soiling

What is Overflow Soiling?

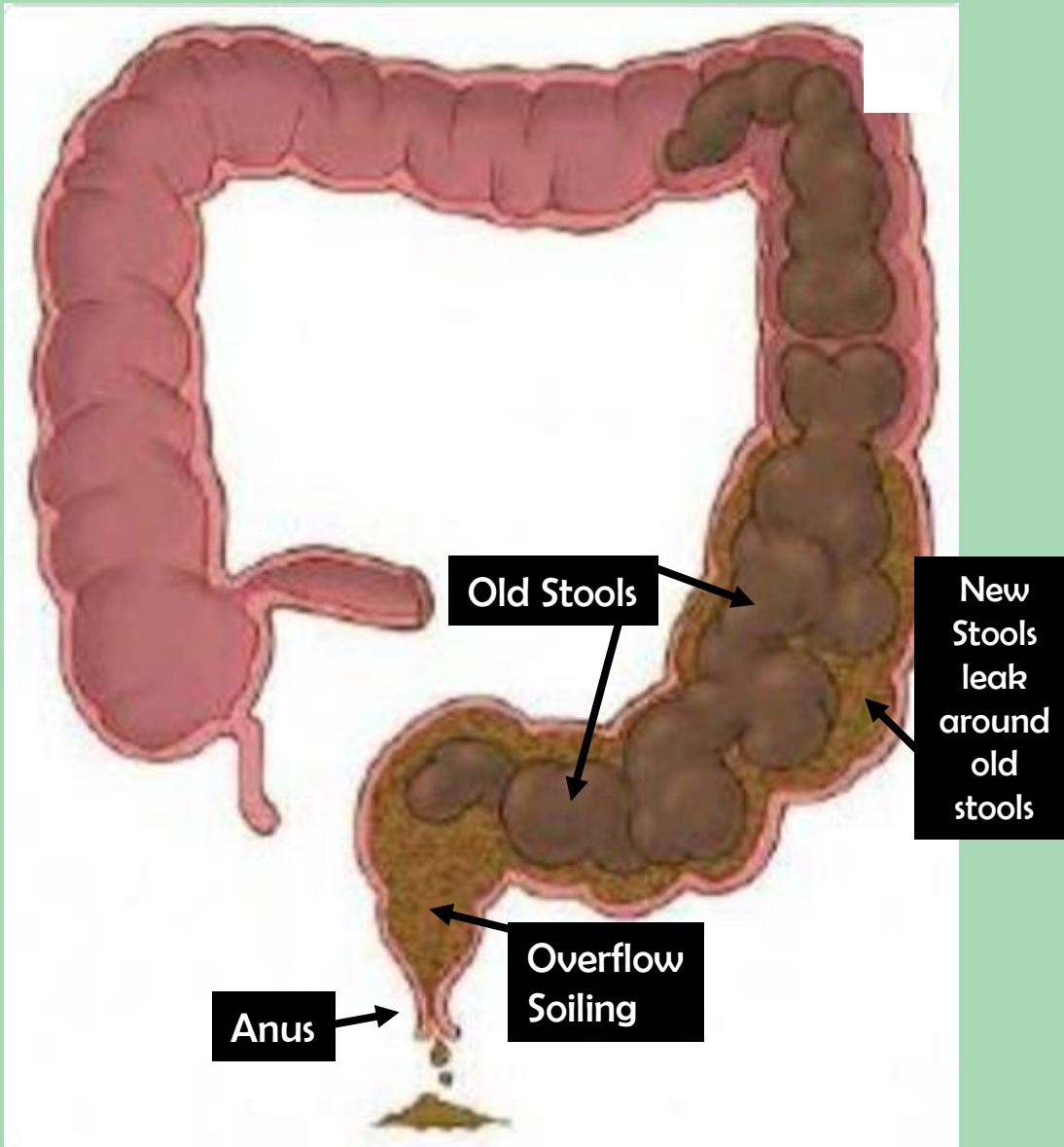
When your child has become severely constipated, their bowel is impacted with faeces. Overflow soiling is the outcome of this impaction.

Prolonged constipation dilates your child's bowel and affects normal sensation and reflex action in the rectum and anus. The action of the bowel is to absorb water from the stools present. New stools are constantly added, (which haven't had water drawn from them yet) and bypass the hard, big stools present in the bowel, and exit the anus as watery stools. Because of the loss of normal control and sensation, this liquid seeps out without the child knowing.



The diagram shows the cycle of constipation

Overflow Soiling Diagram



As a child eats, stools will form within the bowel. In a child who is constipated, these stools will not be excreted from the body, but will instead, remain in the bowel.

As the child continues to eat, more and more stools add to the bowel, making it full. This is known as impaction.

Part of the bowel's function is to absorb water to return it to the rest of the body. In a child who is constipated, the bowel will continue to absorb water as time passes, regardless of the amount of stools present.

As water is taken from the bowel, the stools present (which the child is having difficulty passing) become bigger, harder and drier – making it even more difficult for the child to pass.

The body will continue to add more stools to the already impacted bowel, and as these haven't had water absorbed from them yet, are still wet. These wet stools will try to find a way around the impacted faeces (as shown in the diagram) and will come out of the child's anus as liquid stools, otherwise known as overflow soiling.

It is common for children with overflow soiling to be able to pass infrequent formed stools, but **FREQUENT** watery stools. This is often mistaken as diarrhoea.

Accidents or Overflow?

There are some key differences between your child having an accident, or whether they are suffering from overflow soiling.

Stool Accidents

- The child usually has diarrhoea, usually as a result of illness
- The child has sensation – they know they have had an accident
- Stools are usually wet liquid
- Usually a single episode
- Stools can be easily washed off your child
- Stools can be easily washed out of underwear
- Usually light in colour

Overflow Soiling

- The child has no sensation – they don't even realise they have soiled
- Stools can be dry, crumbly or gloopy
- Stools are usually constantly leaking
- Stools cannot be washed off your child easily – usually needs scrubbing off
- Stools will not wash out of underwear
- Stools are dark in colour and can be gritty and/or grainy

How To Stop Overflow Soiling

In order for the overflow soiling to cease, your child will need to fully empty their bowel. This is known as dis-impaction. If your child is a patient within our caseload, then you will have been given a tailored dis-impaction regime, in order to clear out the stools sitting within your child's bowel. It is important to ensure your child's bowels have been FULLY cleared. This is usually determined by your child passing Type 7 Stools (See chart below) for at least 3 days during the dis-impaction process. No lumps at all should be present within your child's stools.

It is common for overflow soiling to get worse before it improves, so please don't be alarmed if things seems to be getting worse during the initial stage of the dis-impaction process.

Childhood Constipation Service
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This is the ideal stool

