

Sam's list of important things to help himself

I must take my medicine every day without any fuss




I must eat a healthy breakfast, choosing cereals like porridge, wholemeal toast, and have fruit juice to drink




I must sit on the toilet for 5 minutes about 20 minutes after eating my breakfast and again after my dinner to see if any poo wants to come out



I must eat fruit and vegetables (things like apples, peas and carrots)



I must drink 6-7 glasses of water-based drinks every day



I must do lots of exercise



Miss Dean explained that there were other things that I could do to help myself. "When you sit on the toilet Sam, you must feel comfy and safe so that you can concentrate on having a poo. You may need to rest your feet on a small step so that your knees are higher than your hips. Tell Mum if you are worried about anything"



Because it hurts sometimes when I poo, I have tried to keep the poo in and not go to the toilet. Miss Dean said this is called withholding. She told me that it's not good to stop the poo coming out and that there are lots of fun things I can do to help my tummy muscles to push poo out, like having a pot of bubbles to blow, or making a really loud noise with a toy or party horn or making noises by blowing hard on the back of my hand. She also said I can try gently rocking forward and back to a song like 'row, row, row the boat' or to my favourite tune. She told me that it is very important for everyone to sit on the toilet for a few minutes to give poo time to come into your rectum and out of your bottom; it is good sign when you pass wind even if it does make a rude noise, because it lets us know that poo could be on its way.

It's been 3 months since I told Miss Dean about my 'secret'; I'm getting better all the time and only have the occasional accident. I know that it will take a long time for everything to be right but I'm doing everything that Miss Dean asked me to do and it seems to be working. I'm glad my 'secret' is out because talking to Miss Dean helped me to start getting better. Now I can concentrate on becoming the best football player in the world!



Illustrations by Sally Flynn

Hi, I'm Sam and this is my story...

I'm 8 years old. I'm brilliant at football and I'm going to be a professional football player when I grow up. I like school but I'm always being told I chat too much during lessons. I think I'm a pretty average kid, except for my 'secret'!




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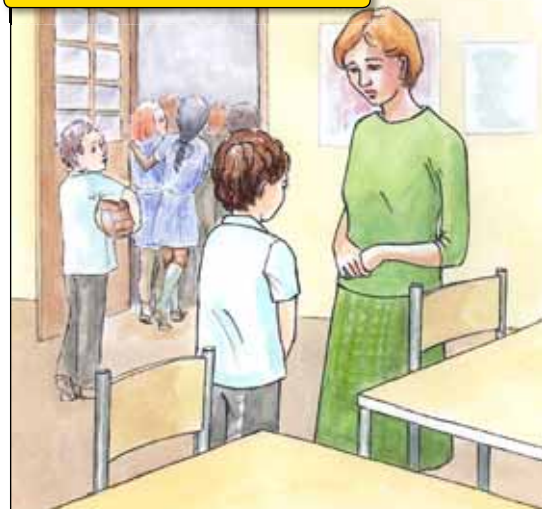


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It's not a good secret like finding treasure. This secret is not a secret that I'd share with my friends. It is the most embarrassing secret in the world - sometimes I poo my pants! I don't do it on purpose, it just happens without any warning. Mum never gets cross but I can tell she's as embarrassed as me.



My most embarrassing day was 3 months ago, when it happened at school. My teacher tried to look as though she understood, but I had a feeling she was very cross.

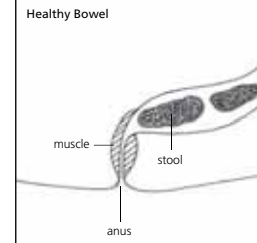
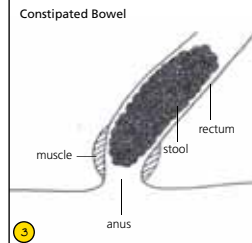
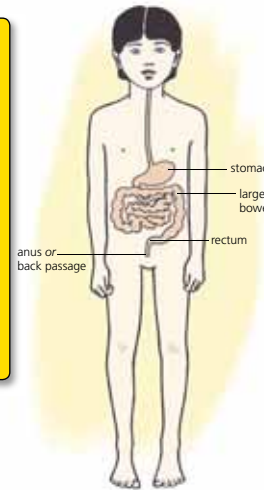
At your age Sam, about 1 child in 75 soils - that's what we call it if you poo your pants. That means there could be 3 or 4 other children at your school who soil. It is quite common.



My teacher said she would talk to Mum and arrange for us to see the school nurse to see if she could help. When Mum and I met Miss Dean, the school nurse, she was very kind and explained that this happens to lots of children. She said there were many reasons why it happens, but mostly it happens when children become constipated.

I had no idea what constipated means, so she explained that if we don't have a poo at least three times a week, the bowel (that's where the poo comes from) gets too full. When children do not poo often enough, the rectum at the lower end of the bowel fills up with enormous poos that can be hard and painful to pass. Sometimes they can be so big that they block the toilet!

Miss Dean showed us pictures so I could understand all about constipation.



Sometimes, hard poo may be held up in your bottom and, every time you move or run around, pieces of poo leak or pop out into your pants. This is called soiling.

Miss Dean said, 'Soiling also happens when runny poo leaks around a harder lump of poo. This can happen without you knowing it, Sam. When you have had constipation for a long time your rectum becomes over stretched so it does not always send you a clear message that it is time to have a poo.'

The good news is that when you are no longer constipated, your rectum will gradually shrink back to its normal size and then you will receive the messages again and be able to make it to the toilet in time.

I was so pleased to hear Miss Dean say that it was not my fault. I really wish it wouldn't happen, but poo just sometimes sneaks out without me knowing and that's really embarrassing.

It was great when she said that we could solve this problem together. She said that it could take a long time, but we would get there if we did what she said. She explained that she would write a 'care plan' for me and Mum to follow and promised to help us whenever we needed more advice.

Miss Dean told us that it would be a good idea to go to see my doctor. He might say that I need to take some medicine to make the poo softer and easier to come out. She said, 'Medicine is often not nice to take; that's why we call it medicine! So, don't make a fuss about taking it, just get on with it because it will help you feel better. And Mum will be so proud of you.'

Miss Dean gave us a list of all the things I can do to help make my 'secret' go away. She explained how important it was for me to drink enough water and to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables; Mum smiled and was happy with that advice as she is always telling me to eat my greens! I promised Mum that I would really try.