

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy

Holding on programme

Information for patients

Introduction

The bowel holding on programme is for people who need to rush to the toilet to have a poo (open their bowels). The programme aims to train your pelvic floor muscles and your nervous system to be able to hold onto your poo (stool). This will improve your confidence and can help you to overcome this problem

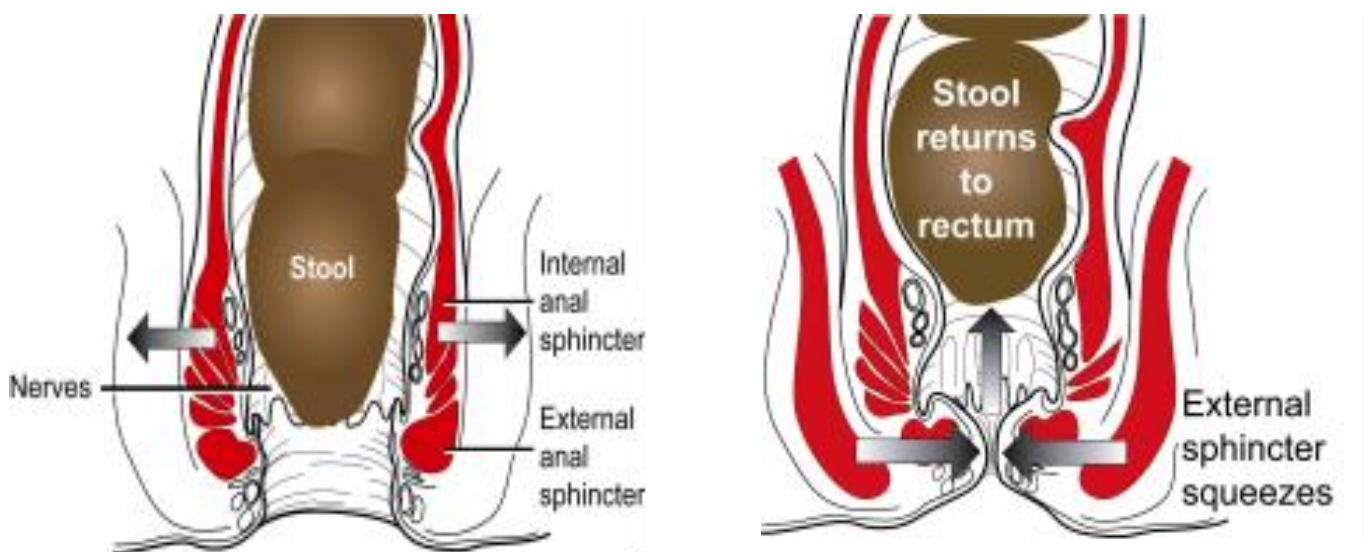
Poo sampling

There are two bands of muscle (sphincters) which help to prevent any accidents of your bowels

- internal anal sphincter – this provides 85% of the tone (the tension in the muscle at rest) to our back passage (rectum). It is not under our control
- external anal sphincter – this provides the remaining 15% of the tone. We can control this. It's what we squeeze to stop wind or poo escaping out of our bottoms

When poo enters the back passage, the internal anal sphincter relaxes for the poo to be 'sampled' by nerves.

This poo sampling helps us understand whether there is formed poo, loose poo, or wind in the back passage.



If poo is felt but you are not able to go to the toilet straightaway, you can squeeze the external sphincter and the poo will move back up the back passage.

This can sometimes be difficult. This can be due to:

- weakness of the external anal sphincter muscle
- the back passage being too sensitive to stretch from the poo
- poo that is too soft and difficult to hold

Your physiotherapist will guide you on the above.

Holding on training

Next time you need to have a poo

Hold on while sitting on a toilet

- sit on the toilet with the seat down and hold on for as long as you can before having a poo
- if you can only manage a few seconds, do not worry. It will gradually get easier
- write down how long you manage to hold for
- whatever you can manage now, you are aiming to double it next time. Then double it again and again
- gradually increase this to 15 minutes. It might help you to keep a log and take a book with you to distract yourself and pass the time
- there is no need to worry if this is difficult. Keep practising daily and remember that you are 'safe' as you are on the toilet

Hold on next to a toilet

- when you have learnt how to do the first stage, do the same process but sit on a chair next to the toilet
- this stage is harder but remember, you are still close to the toilet. So, you are safe

Hold on away from the toilet

- when you can delay having a poo for 10 minutes while off the toilet, you can move the chair further away. Or you can try sitting on the bed in your bedroom
- this will become easier as your muscles improve in strength
- as your confidence improves, you can move further away from the toilet

Consistency

Step by step, you will find that you can increase the distance and time away from the toilet. This may take some time to get right.

It is important to do your holding on training at regular times. Do your pelvic floor exercises at the same time to see the best results.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at **imperial.pals@nhs.net**. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to express your concerns in **writing** to:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street,
London W2 1NY.

Email: **ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net**

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

imperial.patient.information@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Pelvic Health Physiotherapy
Published: May 2024
Review date: May 2027
Reference no: 940
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