

# Reflexology footnotes

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## **Reflexology Eases Encopresis and Chronic Constipation**

After six weeks of reflexology sessions, children with chronic constipation and encopresis, or fecal incontinence, experienced a significant decrease in soiling and a significant increase in bowel movements, according to a recent study.

"Reflexology in the management of encopresis and chronic constipation" was conducted by Eileen Bishop, Evelyn McKinnon, Evelyn Weir and Denise Brown of Ayrshire and Arran Acute Hospitals Trust in the United Kingdom.

Fifty children between the ages of 3 and 14 with a diagnosis of encopresis/chronic constipation participated in the study. They were given 30 minutes of reflexology to their feet once a week for six weeks.

With the help of their parents, the children completed questionnaires on bowel movements and soiling patterns before, during and after the six sessions of reflexology. The questionnaires were designed to record the number of bowel movements and the incidents of soiling in each seven-day period before, during and after the reflexology treatment.

Before the start of reflexology, 78 percent of the participants reported soiling at least daily. Sixteen percent reported soiling one-to-three times a week, and six percent reported no soiling in seven days.

After the reflexology sessions, 20 percent of the group reported soiling at least once a day, 30 percent reported soiling one-to-three times a week, and 48 percent reported no soiling in seven days.

"The results show that soiling episodes reduced significantly," state the study's authors. "This may result in more socially acceptable behavior."

As for bowel movements, the group, before starting reflexology, reported 36 percent with no bowel movement in a period of seven days, 46 percent with one-to-four bowel movements per week, and 18 percent having daily bowel movements.

After the reflexology sessions, two percent had no bowel movement in one week, 72 percent had one-to-four bowel movements per week, and 24 percent reported daily bowel movements.

"The frequency of bowel motions has also significantly increased, with 72 percent now passing motions regularly," state the study's authors.

It was noted that none of the children required an enema during the study, and many parents said their child's appetite increased and sleep pattern improved.

"Administering reflexology to the children has been achieved with ease and there have been no adverse reactions observed or reported," state the study's authors. "Reflexology for childhood encopresis and chronic constipation is now an established service with five pediatricians and two staff grade doctors referring children of all ages for treatment."

- **Source:** *Ayrshire and Arran Acute Hospitals Trust, United Kingdom. Authors: Eileen Bishop, Evelyn McKinnon, Evelyn Weir and Denise Brown. Originally published in Paediatric Nursing, April 2003, Vol. 15, pp. 20-21.*



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