**Review: Behavioural interventions plus laxatives are effective for defaecation disorders in children, but biofeedback does not add benefit**

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**QUESTION:** In children with defaecation disorders, are behavioural interventions effective?

**Data sources**

12 databases were searched in March 2001, reference lists were scanned, and experts were contacted.

**Main results**

14 studies (12 randomised controlled trials, 843 children) met the selection criteria. Children had encopresis in 12 studies and faecal incontinence resulting from congenital abnormalities in 2 studies. Study duration was 2–6 weeks in 6 studies, 8–18 weeks in 6 studies, and 12 months in 1 study. 8 studies compared conventional treatment (laxatives, dietary advice, and toilet training) plus biofeedback with conventional treatment alone. The groups did not differ for number of "unsuccessful" children at 12 and 18 months (table). 1 study compared biofeedback training plus laxatives with biofeedback alone. More children in the biofeedback plus laxatives group than in the biofeedback alone group were unsuccessful at 12 weeks and 12 months (table). 2 studies compared behaviour modifications (toilet training, rewards, and counselling or dietary advice) plus laxatives with behaviour modifications alone. The laxative group had fewer unsuccessful children than did the behaviour modifications alone group at 6 and 12 months (table). 1 study comparing diet modifications and scheduled toileting with mineral oil alone did not differ on any outcomes. 1 study comparing behaviour modifications plus psychotherapy with behaviour modifications alone showed similar findings in each group. 1 study compared groups: behaviour modifications (incentive programmes, toilet training) plus laxatives, laxatives alone, and biofeedback. Behaviour modifications plus laxatives were better than laxatives alone for reducing the number of unsuccessful children (table).

**Conclusions**

In children with defaecation disorders, biofeedback does not add benefit to conventional treatment. The combination of behavioural modification techniques and laxatives is more effective than either intervention alone.