

I know this is very, very, very, late, but as they say, “better late than never” – please find enclosed my comments on the support we received from your guys at Stepping Stones and the immense help that it was to both me and my daughter.

Thank you both so much for your continued help and support and my apologies again for missing the last couple of appointments.

The road toileting – via the constipation clinic

My daughter K was referred to Fiona and Sarah at the constipation clinic, following more than two years of pain and discomfort for her as well as anguish and frustration for her dad and me.

Since birth, K had always passed loose stools and only opened her bowels once every 5-6 days or so. I was advised that this was quite normal for breast fed babies and was not a reason for concern.

When weaned to cow's milk at around 9 months old, it was apparent that she was struggling to go to the toilet. Although often friendly and pleasant, GPs were quite dismissive advising that this is a common problem for infants and K would grow out of it before long. In the meantime, however, she was prescribed Lactulose and Suppositories to help alleviate symptoms.

A year on, the problem was still very much there, and by then, K had started to withhold the stools for long periods, leading to extremely distended abdomen most of the time and great discomfort when opening her bowels.

During this period, we had seen a GP a number of times, so eventually, at my continued request she was referred to a community paediatrician at PRH.

At this point K was taken off Lactulose and instead prescribed Movicol. I was also advised that the use of Suppositories was strongly discouraged as it only leads to exacerbation of the problem, in that a child will withhold the stool even more, for fear of pain.

The Movicol did start to help a little, gauging the correct dosage was extremely difficult as (without going into too much information) the same type of stool could be caused by both too much, or too little of the Movicol.

The next 12 months, proved extremely difficult for us as a family – as I cannot think of anything worse than seeing your child in so much discomfort, when trying to carry out an action that should happen so naturally.

Due to the fact that K was growing ok though the doctors were not too concerned and I felt they could be quite dismissive of the impact that the problem was having on K and us as a family.

Finally in December 2010, between Christmas and new year (at the age of 2yrs, 10 months) K became so blocked that a GP measured her abdomen as the same size as that of a grown man. This resulted in her being admitted to the Childrens ward for an Enema – which was probably the most distressing point for both of us, since the problem began. The Paediatrician was not happy that this had taken place, and decided that we needed more day to day support to help us manage the condition.

Hallelujah!! We were referred to the Constipation Clinic at Stepping Stones.

For the first time, since K was 9 months old I seemed to be speaking with people who actually listened to what I was telling them, believed me when I said that I gave my daughter wholesome fibrous food and did not make me feel like a neurotic mum. Using the Bristol Stool Chart and a combination of Movicol and Senna, the team at Stepping Stones, worked with me to monitor and review K progress and most importantly helped me to manage the dosage of the prescribed medicine to best effect.

The Improvement was not immediate and for a short while still, I was concerned that K may have had Hirschsprungs disease despite the healthy growth pattern that the doctors had kept reiterating. Once again, this was not dismissed out of hand by the team at Stepping Stones and K was referred back to PRH for blood tests etc to start the process for further investigations. These initial tests came back fine.

Before long though there was a marked improvement in K motions – mainly regarding regularity and reduced apprehension/panic when going to the toilet. As a direct result of this, I was able to start thinking about K using the potty (as she was no longer having leakage) and again Fiona and Sarah offered very practical advice. For example at one point I was told the action of blowing helps to open up and it was suggested that I got K to blow bubbles when on the potty – this worked first time.

In the December of 2012, K had at one point been on 10 sachets of Movicol per day – most children I am told require 1-2. She was referred to the Constipation Clinic in January 2011 and by May 2011 K was able to start pre school out of nappies and happy to go to the toilet when she needed.

That is not to say that she never had any accidents for the few weeks or months that she is now free from medication. It is now January 2012 and she is on 5ml Senna each day and 1/2 -1 sachet of Movicol per day – however she is fully toilet trained day and night with no accidents and she is a happy, healthy little girl with a great appetite and a flat tummy.

K has now been discharged from the clinic, however I still have the contact details for them and have been told I can make contact at any time with queries – which is something I would never hesitate to do.

I would like other parents who are going through a similar thing, to be able to benefit from this support. It is all too common for family, friends, nurseries

health care professionals etc to dismiss constipation as a minor problem and that will just right it's self. In our experience, it became a very major problem that was distressing to all concerned and affected daily life considerably.

I am so grateful to the team for their continued support, consideration, encouragement, and care they have given, to both me and my daughter and I hope the services is available for many more people like us in the future.

Thanks you