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FAECAL INCONTINENCE

What is faecal incontinence?

Leakage of bowel contents through the anal canal.

Is it common?

It is very common problem and patients often are too embarrassed to discuss the issue or seek help. It is much commoner in females.

What are the causes?

There are many causes but the commonest relate to problems or damage to the pelvic floor and muscles around the anus. The commonest causes are problems related to childbirth. Other causes of damage include previous operations on the anal canal. Other causes include conditions affecting the rectum itself such as prolapse and even cancer.

What tests are required?

Patients need a number of investigations such as colonoscopy, ultrasound, nerve and muscle tests. Special X-rays are sometimes required.

How to treat faecal incontinence?

Surgery is only rarely required. Specific conditions may benefit from surgery such as prolapse or sphincter injuries.

All patients benefit from specialised pelvic floor physiotherapy.