

## FAECAL INCONTINENCE IN SRI LANKAN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEY

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**INTRODUCTION:** Faecal incontinence is seen in 1-4% of children and has a significant impact on their quality of life. Community based studies on this important problem are scarce. There is no data regarding prevalence of faecal incontinence from developing countries. **OBJECTIVES:** To detect the prevalence of faecal incontinence in Sri Lankan school children 10-16 years and factors associated with this condition. **DESIGN, SETTING AND METHOD:** This was a school based, island-wide, cross sectional survey. A validated, self-administered questionnaire was distributed to randomly selected children, aged 10-16 years, in 5 randomly selected schools, from 3 geographically and socio-economically different provinces in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire was filled under guidance of research assistants. Faecal incontinence was defined as defaecation into places inappropriate to the social context, at least once per month, for a minimum period of 2 months. Constipation was defined using Rome III criteria. **RESULTS:** A total of 2770 questionnaires was distributed and 2686 (96%) were included in the analysis. Of them 55 (2%) had faecal incontinence [male 43 (78%), mean age 11.96 years, SD 1.59 years]. Forty five (82%) had constipation associated faecal incontinence and 10 (18%) had non-retentive faecal incontinence. The highest prevalence was seen in children aged 10 years (5.4%). A significant negative correlation was observed between age and the prevalence of faecal incontinence ( $r=-0.893$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Faecal incontinence was significantly higher in males (male 3.2%, females 0.9%), those exposed to recent school and family related stressful life events and those from lower social classes ( $p<0.05$ ). Other symptoms associated with this condition were abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting ( $p<0.05$ ). **CONCLUSIONS:** Faecal incontinence was seen in 2% of Sri Lankan children and adolescents aged 10-16 years. The majority had constipation associated faecal incontinence. It was more commonly seen in males, younger age, those from a lower social background and children who were exposed to stressful events.