

IMPERFORATE ANUS

Imperforate Anus is a congenital abnormality where there is abnormal patency of the anus so there is no exit for faeces. It occurs in about 1:5000 live births. There are various classifications of this condition depending on the level of the defect.

Type 1: Anal Stenosis (*narrowing of anus*)

Type 2: Imperforate anal membrane (*anus is there but is covered*)

Type 3: Anal agenesis and rectal agenesis (*the anus and rectum are not formed and the bowel ends as a blind pouch*)

Type 3 is the most common. There are associated other abnormalities that exist in over half the babies born with this condition. Some of these abnormalities are tracheo-oesophageal fistulae (*a tract between the trachea and oesophagus*), vertebral anomalies, genitourinary abnormalities, fistulae and occasionally congenital heart disease.

The cause is not known. Physical examination shows absence or displacement of the anus. There may be abdominal distension and or vomiting.

For children with a low abnormality - corrective surgery is performed shortly after birth (*more than 50%*). For the remaining group with a high defect where the bowel ends above the sphincter muscles, corrective surgery is delayed and a temporary colostomy is performed which relieves clinical problems and provides a way out for the faeces. The colostomy allows time for more extensive evaluation and for pelvic growth.

Corrective surgery involves forming a new bowel pathway to link the pelvic colon and also creating an anus. The absence of a normal external sphincter muscle that closes and opens anus makes achieving full continence difficult, with maybe 50% of children achieving control and 25% achieving some control. The child and family will most likely need a great deal of help to develop a routine that can help to maximise bowel control. Many families find it extremely helpful to talk to other families and share ideas. There is a small group of parents in Melbourne who would like to make contact with other families in Victoria. If you would like to know more please contact: bridgetteliedtke@yahoo.com.au

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