Table 3

Core elements of physical examination to diagnose idiopathic constipation [4]

	Findings that indicate idiopathic constipation	Red flags that may indicate an underlying condition
Perianal area: appearance, position, patency etc	Normal appearance	Abnormal appearance/ position/patency of anus: fistulae, bruising, multiple fissures or patulous anus, anteriorly placed anus, absent anal wink
Abdominal examination	Soft abdomen. Flat or distended	Gross abdominal distension
Spine/lumbosacral region/ gluteal examination	Normal appearance	Abnormal: asymmetry or flattening of gluteal muscles, evidence of sacral agenesis, discoloured skin, naevi or sinus, hairy patch or central pit
Lower limb neuromuscular examination including tone and strength	Normal gait. Normal tone and strength in lower limbs	Lower limb deformity e.g. talipes Abnormal neuromuscular signs not explained by existing condition e.g. cerebral palsy
Lower limb neuromuscular examination: reflexes	Reflexes of normal amplitude	Abnormal reflexes

Adapted from NICE CG 99. The diagnosis and management of idiopathic childhood constipation in primary and secondary care