

Is Your Child **Constipated?**



More
fiber, liquids, and
lots of activity
can help!



Constipation

Does your child have hard, dry stools (poops) that are difficult to pass? Your child may have constipation.

Signs of constipation may include:

- Stomach pain or pain while having a bowel movement
- Less than three bowel movements a week
- Dry, hard stools that are difficult to pass

Things to know:

- Always check with your health care professional if the problem persists.
- Laxatives, suppositories, enemas, and mineral oil are not recommended. These can cause health problems for your child.
- If the stool is soft, your child is likely not constipated.

A woman with long brown hair is shown in profile, kissing a baby on the cheek. The baby is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

What can cause constipation?

- Not eating enough fiber-rich foods
- Not enough movement or activity
- Holding bowel movements
- Dehydration due to vomiting or fever
- Some medical conditions or medications

In babies:

- Baby formula mixed wrong
- Solid foods started too early, before 6 months

In toddlers and young children:

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Too many processed foods low in fiber



Babies Under 6 Months

During the first month, babies may have a few stools (poopy diapers) a day. After one month, babies have fewer stools each day or even a stool every few days. Babies who drink formula tend to have firmer stools than babies who are breastfed; this is not constipation.

If you think your baby may have constipation:

- Check with your health care professional to be sure your baby is getting enough breastmilk or formula. Be sure you are mixing the formula correctly.
- Put a warm washcloth on your baby's stomach.
- Do not change formulas unless your health care professional tells you to do so.
- Breastfeed more often.
- Give your baby tummy time. It helps your baby's head, neck and upper body muscles develop.

Babies Over 6 Months

Help your baby be more active. Encourage baby to move or crawl on the floor.

If you think your older baby has constipation:

- Give your baby more liquids. Twice a day, you can offer 4 ounces of plain water or 2 ounces of prune, pear or apple juice mixed with 2 ounces of water.
- Give your baby more foods with fiber, like soft fruits and soft cooked vegetables.
- Soften one teaspoon of 100% bran cereal with breastmilk or formula and add this to your baby's food.



A young child with dark hair, wearing a red, white, and blue plaid shirt and khaki pants, is running happily on a grassy field. The background is a lush green park with trees and a building in the distance.

Toddlers and Young Children

- Offer your child a variety of foods high in fiber. Whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fresh fruit are especially good.
- Be sure your child gets to play actively every day!
- Give your child plenty of liquids, especially water, every day.
- Encourage your child to use the bathroom often and regularly.
- Set aside a quiet time for using the toilet.
- Limit milk to 2 cups (16 ounces) a day.



Foods High in Fiber

Whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables and fruits are especially good sources of fiber. Here are a few examples:

Whole Grain Products

- Whole grain breads
- Whole grain crackers
- Popcorn

Hot & Cold Breakfast Cereals

- 100% bran cereal
- Shredded wheat cereal
- Oatmeal



Cooked Grains

- Brown rice
- Barley



Cooked Vegetables

- Carrots
- Peas
- Broccoli
- Cooked spinach or other greens
- Summer and winter squash
- Sweet potatoes





Children under age 4 can choke more easily on foods such as popcorn, nuts, dried fruit, and raw vegetables. Cut foods into small pieces and stay close by.



Fruits

- Pears
- Dried fruits
- Apples
- Berries
- Bananas

Beans and Nut Products

- Pinto, black, and kidney beans
- Dried peas (split peas)
- Lentils
- Peanut butter



High Fiber Menu Suggestions for Toddlers and Children

Menus	Day 1	Day 2
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrambled egg • Bran muffin • Prune juice • Milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oatmeal with raisins • Berries • Milk
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pear with skin • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain toast strips with peanut butter • Orange juice
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lentil soup • Tuna sandwich on whole wheat bread • Milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable beef soup • Cheese quesadilla with corn tortilla • Milk
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain crackers with peanut butter • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruits • Water
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tacos with beef and beans • Cooked carrots • Fresh fruit salad • Milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked chicken • Peas • Brown rice • Milk



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