

Constipation

What is it?

Constipation is when stools or bowel movements are infrequent, dry, hard, and/or painful. Babies and kids can present with abdominal pain, bloating, fussiness, refusal to eat, and sometimes vomiting. Another frequent symptom of constipation is urinating frequently. Constipation is one of the most common causes of belly pain and most common reason to see a doctor. Ideally, kids should have 1-2 soft stools daily.

How can you make sure to have normal stools?

- **Drink water:** Making sure to drink lots of water helps keep stool soft. Ask your doctor how much liquid your child should drink daily.
- **Fiber:** Fiber is naturally found in foods; including, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds. The AAP recommends that children between the ages of 2 and 19 should eat a daily amount of fiber that equals their age plus 5, for example a 4-year-old should take in $4 + 5 = 9$ grams of fiber a day. You can also supplement your child's diet with fiber gummies or Metamucil.
- **Healthy Eating:** Eating a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is important. Just as important is avoiding processed foods such as pop tarts, goldfish, fruit snacks, and other packaged foods. Another great think to do is eat fermented foods that will give your "gut" or intestines healthy bacteria to help you digest your foods.
- **Probiotics:** There is no "one size fits all" when talking about probiotics. What works for one person may not work at all for another. We like Gerber Probiotic for babies, Nordic Natural, Culturelle Kids, and Florajen Kids for toddlers and school aged kids and Culturelle and Florajen for older kids.

Good Food Choices: Fruits, vegetables, beans, brown rice, quinoa, sweet potatoes, steel cut oats, dried fruits, nuts, seeds like pumpkin, chia, or sunflower seeds, ground flaxseed in smoothies or on yogurt, olives, plain popcorn, blue corn chips and salsa. Healthy bars include Larabar, Kind, Rx bar, Perfect Bar.

Good Fermented Foods (contain good bacteria): Plain whole milk yogurt, cultured sauerkraut, cultured pickles, cultured cream cheese, tempeh (fermented soybean), kimchi, kefir, artisan sourdough bread, miso and alcohol-free kombucha for toddlers and school aged 2-4 oz per day is good, teens and adults 6-8 oz per day.

Foods to Avoid: Cheez Its, Goldfish, Pop tarts, fruit snacks, Taki's, Cheetos, Doritos, cakes, cookies, donuts, and processed snacks and foods. Avoid fast food, deep fat fried foods, high sugar foods, artificial colors, artificial sweeteners, and preservatives. Avoid drinks with artificial sweeteners as "fake" sugar products like Stevia, Aspartame, Splenda, and Nutrasweet can kill your stomachs good bacteria making it harder to digest food and causing constipation.

What is the treatment for constipation?

Please see your child's provider before trying any of the following medications

- Increase water and fiber in your child's diet (ask your doctor for a list of high fiber food)
- For babies, try pear or prune juice found in the baby aisle
- Try a Squatty Potty-a step to put under your toilet which helps with the action of having a bowel movement. Check out www.squattypotty.com
- Your doctor may have you try laxatives:
 - Miralax (polyethylene glycol): tasteless powder mixed into 8 oz of water. Increase or decrease daily dose to reach a goal of 1-2 soft stools a day. Decrease if stool is too loose. Make sure your child stays hydrated. Usual dosage is: babies and toddlers 1-2 tsp daily mixed in water; school aged half cap daily mixed in water; adolescent 1 cap a day mixed in water.
 - Colace (Docusate): used as a stool softener to decrease pain of stool passing. Dose for children 2-12 years 50mg=15mL 1-2x daily.
 - Ex Lax, Pedia-lax, Dulcolax-ask your provider for specific dosages
 - Calm (magnesium citrate) gummies or Drink Mix
1 Gummy contains 83 mg of magnesium citrate and Calm Drink Mix contains 350mg mg citrate; 4-12 years old: 1 gummy per day or ½ to 1 teaspoon or as recommended by your provider; 13-Adult: 4 gummies per day or 1-2 teaspoons or as recommended by your provider
 - We **do not** recommend rectal stimulation or enemas unless advised by your child's doctor
- Clean out: This is used in a child who is severely backed up with stool, meaning they haven't stooled in over a week.
 - Goal of a clean out is to have 3 clear diarrheal stools a day
 - Mix Miralax 3 caps (51g) into 32 oz of liquid and drink over the day and repeat until stools are clear.
 - Make sure your child remains hydrated and continues to drink plenty of liquids apart from Miralax mixture. Monitor your child for signs of dehydration (decreased and concentrated number of urines, dried/chapped lips, no tears when crying, decreased alertness)
 - Once cleaned out, take 1-2 days off of medication and then adjust daily water, fiber and Miralax intake to achieve soft stools one to two times a day.
 - STOP clean out if there is sudden and severe belly pain, vomiting, green or red in vomit, dehydration, or worsening abdominal bloating and call your provider.
 - Return to clinic in 1 week