

What is constipation?

- Stools that are hard, dry, and difficult or painful to pass.
- These stools can occur daily or they may be less frequent.

What causes constipation?

- Constipation may occur for a variety of reasons, and often it is a combination of one or more of the following:

Diet:

- Sudden changes in diet
- Lack of fiber
- Lack of liquid

Withholding:

- To avoid pain if they are constantly having hard stools.
- To avoid pain from a diaper rash.
- Toddler/preschool age dealing with issues of independence and control to avoid taking a break from play or activity.
- Older children embarrassed to use a public toilet.

Illness:

- Loss of appetite leading to a diet change.
- Side effect of medication (always ask about side effects when starting new medication) certain medical conditions can cause kids to be more prone to constipation.

Other:

- Changes to routine: travel, family conflict, stressful situations

What are symptoms of constipation?

- Many days in a row without a normal bowel movement
- Hard stools that are painful or difficult to pass
- Stomach pain, cramping, nausea
- Rectal bleeding
- Poor appetite
- Behavior changes like irritability
- Encopresis: soiling when liquid stool passes around hard stool too large to pass through the colon crossing legs, clenching buttocks, making faces - trying to hold stool in.

How Can I Help My Child with Constipation?

Make sure your child is getting enough fiber:

Ensure they are getting at least 5 servings of fruits and/or vegetables per day. Below are some foods high in fiber:

<u>Fruits</u>	<u>Vegetables</u>	<u>Legumes/Nuts/Seeds</u>	<u>Whole Grains</u>
Apple with skin	Broccoli	Kidney beans	Whole wheat cereal
Pear with skin	Carrots	Lima beans	Whole wheat bread
Peach with skin	Cauliflower	Black beans	Quinoa
Raspberries	Brussel sprouts	Almonds	Oatmeal
Prunes	Spinach	Pistachios	Brown rice
Apricots		Chia seeds	Barley cereal
Plums			

Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids - especially water!

Decrease constipating foods:

- Dairy: milk, cheese, ice cream, etc.
- Binding fruits: bananas, apple sauce.
- Processed white grains: white rice, white bread, white flour.

Set up a regular routine for using the toilet:

- A good place to start is having them sit on the toilet three times daily after a meal.
- Have them sit for 5-10 minutes.
- Reading or looking at a book is an appropriate activity while sitting.
- If their feet can not reach the ground, get them a stool so that they can be in the proper, most effective position to push out a BM.

Make sure they are physically active:

- Physical activity keeps the bowels moving.
- Regular physical activity leads to an overall healthy lifestyle.

Understanding how our gastrointestinal tract works is helpful!

- Watch the video titled “The Poo in You” on YouTube and share it with your constipated child if they are old enough.

Medication as prescribed:

- Miralax is most commonly prescribed for children who are chronically constipated. It is a non-stimulant stool softener that draws water into the colon to help soften hard stool and make it easier to pass.
- Miralax has been well-studied and proven to be safe and effective.
- The stool softener often will need to be continued for 6-12 months. This is because it can take time for the bowel muscles and rectum to work like they are supposed to. Your healthcare provider will discuss timing depending on your child’s specific needs.
- There are other medications that your healthcare provider may prescribe that will be discussed on an individual basis.
- It is important to take the medications as directed to help your child be successful with constipation management.