

Constipation

Definition:

- Passing a painful bowel movement
- Very hard, dry stool
- Very infrequent bowel movement (one stool every 4 or 5 days for a child)
**Please note that breastfed and even bottle-fed babies can go a week without a stool and this is ok as long as the baby is feeding well and healthy.

Cause:

Constipation is commonly caused by a diet too little in fiber and fluids. Often children who consume large quantities of milk (greater than 20 ounces or 3 cups per day) or milk products have constipation. Sometimes if a child has had a tear or fissure of the anus or painful stooling in the past, they will withhold stool making themselves very constipated.

Treatment:

1. **For infants less than 1 year old:** Try 1-2 ounces of water with 1-2 teaspoons of Karo syrup. Prune juice can also be used (start with 1 teaspoon per day alone or mixed into the formula bottle and if necessary work up to 1 to 2 ounces per day). Remember to continue your baby's normal feedings of formula or breastmilk and solids if over 4 months old. Changing formulas usually will not help constipation and the iron in formula does not cause constipation.
2. **For children over 1 year old:** Encourage fruits and vegetables three times a day. Increase the amount of fiber in your child's diet, such as bran muffins, whole grain cereals and bread, oatmeal, whole wheat bread, and brown rice. Decrease the amount of constipating foods such as milk, cheese and other dairy products. Make sure your child is drinking enough fluids, water and prune or apple juice at full strength are very helpful.
3. **For children who are toilet trained:** Encourage your child to sit on the toilet 10 minutes after meals and to stop play and sit on the toilet whenever the urge to have a bowel movement arises.

NEVER, NEVER USE RECTAL STIMULATIONS OR SUPPOSITORIES:

Although rectal stimulating with a thermometer or using a suppository may help your baby have a bowel movement, this may cause dependence upon rectal stimulation and more importantly may hide a more serious problem such as a bowel obstruction. Always treat constipation from the top (mouth) never the bottom.

CALL OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY:

Your child develops severe abdominal or rectal pain

CALL OUR OFFICE DURING OFFICE HOURS IF:

Your child has not had a bowel movement after 3 days of the nonconstipating diet.

Your child has blood in the stool.

You have other concerns or questions.

