

Pediatric Urology of Western New York, P.C.

219 Bryant St. Buffalo, NY 14222 Phone: (716) 878-7393 Fax: (716) 878-7096 www.pediatricurologyofwny.com

Constipation

Bowel patterns can vary from child to child, just as they do in adults. What is normal for your child may be different from what is normal for another child. Most children have 1-2 bowel movements everyday. Other children may have one bowel movement every 2-3 days. If your child does not have daily bowel movements, you may worry that they are constipated. If they are healthy and have normal stools, without discomfort or pain, this may be their normal bowel pattern.

Children with constipation have stools that are hard, dry and often difficult to pass. These stools may occur daily or be less frequent. Although constipation can cause discomfort and pain, it is usually temporary and can be treated. If constipation is not treated, it may get worse. The longer the stool stays in the lower intestinal tract, the larger, firmer and drier they become. It then becomes more difficult and painful for your child to pass the stool.

Causes of Constipation

Constipation occurs for a variety of reasons:

Diet– Changes in diet or not enough fiber or fluid in your child’s diet can cause constipation.

Illness– If your child is sick and loses their appetite, a change in diet can disrupt their system and cause them to be constipated. Constipation can also be a side effect of some medications and/or certain medical conditions.

Behavior/Habits– Your child may be purposefully trying to withhold their stool. Children withhold stool for multiple reasons including to avoid pain from passing hard stools or because of a bad diaper rash. Between ages 2-5, children are developing independence and control. Having a bowel movement is an activity that children can control easily and a child may withhold their stool because they can. Children also become involved in their play and withhold their stools because they do not want to take a break from their activity. Older children may hold their stool due to concerns about using a public toilet or because they are embarrassed to have a bowel movement in public.

Other Changes– In general, any change in your child’s routine (such as travel, hot weather or stressful situations) may affect their overall health and how their bowels function.

Symptoms of constipation

- Frequent urination.
- Poor appetite.
- Cranky behavior.
- Abdominal pain.
- Hard stools that are difficult or painful to pass.
- Rectal bleeding from tears, called fissures.
- Soiling (see Encopresis).
- Many days without normal bowel movements.

You may notice your child crossing their legs, making faces, stretching, clenching their buttocks or twisting their body on the floor. It may look like your child is trying to push the stool out but they may really be trying to hold it in.

Encopresis

Children who withhold stool may stretch their rectum due to the largeness of the stools. When this happens, the sensation or urge to pass a stool decreases. Children with this decreased sensation or urge to stool often need the help of an enema, laxative or other bowel treatment to help evacuate such a large

stool. Sometimes only liquid can pass around the stool and you notice this liquid on your child's underwear. The liquid stool may look like diarrhea, confusing parents and pediatricians, but it is not diarrhea. This problem is called encopresis.

Treatment for Constipation

Constipation is treated in different ways. Your child's doctor will recommend a treatment based on your child's age and how serious the problem is. If your child's case is severe, they may need a special medical test, such as an X-ray. In most cases, no tests are needed.

For Babies

Constipation is rarely a problem in younger infants. It may become a problem when a baby starts solid foods. Your pediatrician may suggest adding more water or juice to your child's diet.

For Children

When a child or teen is constipated, it may be because their diet does not include enough high-fiber foods and water. Your child's doctor may suggest adding more high-fiber foods to your child's diet and encourage your child to drink more water. The doctor also may prescribe medication to soften or remove the stool. **NEVER** give your child laxatives or enemas unless you are directed by a doctor. Laxatives can be dangerous to children if not used properly. After the stool is removed, your child's doctor may suggest ways you can help your child develop good bowel habits and to prevent stools from backing up again.

Putting more fiber into your child's diet

Dietary fiber, which can be called roughage, is a part of plant foods that the body cannot digest. Nutrition experts and doctors agree that dietary fiber helps promote bowel regularity and prevents constipation. Fiber also helps to lower cholesterol, controls blood sugar and helps you feel full. It is recommended that children between the ages of 2 to 19 years eat a daily amount of fiber that is equal to their age plus five (ie: a 7 year old needs 12 grams of fiber).

Foods rich in fiber include fruits, vegetables, dried beans and peas, whole grain breads and cereals, nuts and seeds. Food product labels can tell you how much fiber is in each serving of a food product. Some good choices to start with are: whole grain breads and crackers, bran cereals, whole wheat pancakes/waffles/pasta and brown rice. You can also add granola or wheat germ to yogurt and add unprocessed bran to moist foods such as applesauce, biscuits, soups, stews, hot cereal, pancakes, waffles, muffins, ground meats and casseroles.

Remember: NO nuts, seeds and raw vegetables in children under 3 years old due to risk of choking. It is also important to increase your child's fluid intake along with the fiber. Fiber absorbs water, which helps your child produce soft stools.

Some Examples of Fiber in Foods

Apple w/Skin, 1 medium	4g	Peach w/Skin	2g
Banana, 1 medium	3g	Pear w/Skin, 1 medium	5g
Blueberries	4g	Prunes, 5	5g
Blackberries, 1/2 cup	4g	Raisins, 1/2 cup	2g
Grapes, 1/2 cup	0.7g	Raspberries, 1 cup	6g
Orange, 1 medium	3g	Strawberries, 1 cup	3g
Cereal: Fiber One, 1/2 cup	14g	Legumes: Kidney Beans, 1/2cup	5g
All-Bran, 1/2 cup	10g	Lima Beans, 1/2cup	3g
Cheerios, 1 cup	3g	Navy Beans	3g
Instant Oatmeal, 1 packet	3g	Lentils, 1/2 cup	8g

	Raisin Bran, 1 cup	7.3g	Chickpeas, 1/2 cup	6g
			Baked beans w/franks, 1 cup	17.9g
Vegetables:	Broccoli, 1stalk	5g	Refried beans, 1/2 cup	6.5g
	Brussels sprouts, 8	5g	Peanut butter, 1 Tbsp	2g
	Carrots, 1cup	4g	Snap green beans, 1/2 cup	4g
	Cauliflower, 1cup	2g	Chili, 1 cup	9g
	Corn, 1/2 cup	2g	Ham and bean soup, 1 cup	11g
	Lettuce, 1 cup	1g	Pinto beans, 1/2 cup	7.5g
	Mixed vegetables, 1 cup	8g	Blackeyed peas, 1/2 cup	5.5g
	Peas, 1/2 cup	4g	Split pea soup, 1 cup	2.8g
	Potato, 1 large w/skin	2g		
	Spinach, 1 cup	8g		
	Sweet potato, 1 w/skin	3g		
	Winter squash, 1/2 cup	3g		
Grains:	Brown rice, 1 cup	2g		
	Barley, 1/2 cup	3g		
	Fiber One bars, 1 bar	5g		
	Triscuits, 7	4g		
	Mixed nuts, 1/2 oz	1.3g		
	Popcorn, 3 cups	3g		
	White rice, 1 cup	1g		
	Whole wheat bread (1slice)	1.7g		
	Whole wheat spaghetti, 1 cup	3g		
Other:	Fiber Gummies	2g per gummie		
	Juice + Fibre	10g per box		
	Benefiber for Children	3g for every 2 teaspoons, (Max of 2 Tablespoons daily)		
	Fiber One Bars	9g per bar		

For more information on constipation, high fiber recipes and ways to get fiber into your child's diet, please visit www.pedia-lax.com

To purchase Juice + Fibre, please visit www.woodburyproducts.com. The juice runs about 48\$ for 27 boxes.

CUPID: Center for Urology and Pediatric Incontinence Disorders

Saul P. Greenfield, MD
Pediatric Urologist

Pierre Williot, MD
Pediatric Urologist

Allyson Fried, CPNP
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Sabrina Meyer, CPNP
Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Lynn Meranto
Registered Nurse