

Managing Constipation in Children

Constipation is common and can affect people of all ages, including children.

It's likely to be constipation if:



- Your child has not had a poo at least 3 times in a week
- The poo is often difficult to push out and larger than usual
- The poo is often dry, hard or lumpy

Things to look out for in babies and toddlers include:

- A lack of energy
- Being irritable, angry, or unhappy
- Being less hungry than usual
- A firm tummy
- Feeling uncomfortable



Common causes of constipation:



- Not eating enough fibre – such as fruit, vegetables, and cereals
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Poor potty training – such as feeling pressured or being regularly interrupted

Simple dietary changes can help with the management of constipation. These can be used in combination with laxatives which your child's doctor will advise on and prescribe.

Most of the advice for managing constipation is around healthy eating and getting into good habits that are positive for the whole family!

Sources of fibre

Foods	How can I use them in my child's diet?
Wholegrain breakfast cereal (not unprocessed bran)	Try Weetabix, shredded wheat or oats / porridge. You could mix with a favourite cereal if your child struggles to swap straight away.
Wholemeal pasta or rice	This could be combined with white pasta or rice to help your child swap over. Gradually increase the amount of wholemeal used until you swap completely.
Jacket potatoes with skins	Try making potato wedges with skins, or filling potato skins with tuna and cheese.
Dried or tinned fruit (skin on!)	This can be eaten with yogurt, custard or jelly. Dried fruit can be used in baking.
Pure unsweetened fruit juice	A small glass only, this can be diluted with water to make a bigger drink.
Wholemeal breads	Wholemeal bread is full of fibre, but a 50/50 or 'best of both' bread still contains plenty of fibre – so this can be used as well.
Pulses and beans	Try adding into sauces – chilli con carne with kidney beans, chickpeas or butter beans in a pasta sauce or soup/stew. Baked beans are another excellent source of fibre.

Other good sources of fibre: fruit desserts, vegetables, hummus, high fibre biscuits, wholemeal scones, peanut butter and peanuts (no whole nuts for children under 5 years).

Be cautious with high fibre snacks being eaten close to meals as this may reduce appetite for main meals.

- Ensure adequate fluid intake – children should be aiming for 1-1.5 litres per day, but more on hot days.
 - If your child's wee is strong smelling and dark, then they need to drink more fluid
- Ensure adequate movement/exercise – encourage fun activities!
- Calm and positive toileting environment – establish regular times to sit on the toilet each day.
 - For example, after meals for 5 minutes

If constipation persists despite following the healthy lifestyle advice please see your doctor to discuss next steps.

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