

Constipation in Children

Constipation is present when your child's *stools* (bowel movements) change from soft or mushy to dry and hard. Stomach pain and streaks of blood in the stool may also occur. Illnesses that make the child less hungry or less active may cause constipation. Not eating enough of the right foods, or not exercising enough, can also result in constipation.

The number of times that a child should have a bowel movement (pass the stool) varies. One or more bowel movements a day, or 1 bowel movement every 2 or 3 days, are both normal if the stool is soft and not dry or hard.

Treatment Hints for Constipation

- **For Children** (over 2 years of age)
 - Give foods **high in fiber**, such as: brans, whole grains, fruits and vegetables (such as carrots, celery, broccoli, prunes, apricots, figs, and pineapple). To prevent stomach upset, start with only small amounts of these foods.

Instead of:

Give:

White bread	Whole-grain breads
White rice	Brown rice
Pastries, sweets, puddings	Fresh fruits
Sugar-coated cereals	Whole-grain and bran cereals and other bran products

- Until the constipation is gone, give **smaller** amounts of bananas, potatoes, cheeses, yams/sweet potatoes, and milk.
- Encourage regular **exercise**.
- Give lots of **liquids** to drink (especially water and juice).
- Give one of the following:
 - Metamucil® (or the generic equivalent), Effersyllium®, Naturacil®, Fiberall®, Citrucel®, or Naturelax®. (Follow directions on the labels.)

- **For Infants** (over 1 month of age)
 - Give **prune juice**: 1 to 4 ounces, 2 or 3 times a day, until the stools are soft.
 - Give **plain water**: several times a day, to help soften the stools.

Honey and corn syrup (such as Karo) should NOT be given to infants under 1 year of age.

Products listed are available in your pharmacy. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If your child has persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.

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