

Dietary advice for constipation in children

Nutrition and Dietetics

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Information for Patients

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What is constipation?

Constipation is common in childhood. This usually happens when children are being potty trained at around 2 to 3 years old. Constipation happens in children when they:

- do not poo often,
- find it difficult to poo,
- have irregular pooing patterns.

How will I know if my child has constipation?

- If your child has not been for a poo at least 3 times in a week.
- If your child's poos (stools) are large, hard or painful to pass.
- If your child's poos could be described as pellets or rabbit droppings.
- If your child has runny or liquid poos. This can mean that hard poos (stools) are backed up.

What can cause constipation?

- Not eating enough high-fibre foods.
- Not drinking enough and/or dehydration.
- Too much pressure around potty training.
- Your child may be feeling anxious or stressed around going to the toilet.
- Lack of physical activity/ mobility (for example, wheelchair users).

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How to prevent constipation:

What is fibre and why is it needed?

Fibre comes from a part of plant foods that are not digested in the small intestine. Fibre acts like a sponge inside the large intestine to absorb water. This makes the poo softer and bulkier and easier to pass. Eating enough fibre makes it easier for your child to go for a poo more regularly and with less struggle.

How much fibre does your child need?

Age (years)	Grams (g) of fibre per day
2 to 5 years old	15g
5 to 11 years old	20g
11 to 16 years old	25g
16 to 18 years old	30g

Which foods are high in fibre?

All fruit and vegetables.

Foods	Portion size	Grams (g) of fibre
Porridge	30g	4g
Wholemeal bread	Thick slice	3g
Weetabix	1 biscuit	2g
Wholemeal pasta	100g	4g
Apple	Medium	2g
Strawberries	100g	4g
Baked beans	200g	7g
Broccoli	100g	3g
Peanuts	30g	3g
Jacket potato with skin on	150g	3g
Wholegrain rice	100g	2g

Fluid

If your child does not drink enough and is dehydrated, the body can take water from the poo to use in other parts of the body. This can make your child's poo hard and difficult to pass. The amount of fluid your child needs is based on your child's age and weight. This will be different depending on factors like weather and activity.

Good sources of fluid include:

- Milk
- Water
- Fruit juice
- No added sugar diluted squash
- Foods with a high fluid content. For example, fruit and vegetables or soups.

Probiotics

Probiotics are live bacteria. They promote the good bacteria in your gut.

Probiotics may help your child when eaten regularly in fermented foods including live yogurts, sauerkraut and other live foods.

Speak to a doctor or dietitian for advice on what probiotics are available.

Activity

Regular activity such as walking, running can help the muscles in the bowel to help pass poo.

Try to avoid having long hours of inactivity. It is important to this to reduce constipation.

Massage

Some recent evidence suggests baby massages can reduce the symptoms of constipation and help your child to poo.

Contact details:

Nutrition and Dietetics: **0116 258 5400**

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