

Nutrition Facts

Constipation in Babies and Children

Bowel habits are different for every child. Some babies have bowel movements after every feeding; some children have them days apart. Both extremes are perfectly normal and may just be your child's pattern.

What are symptoms of constipation?

If your child has painful bowel movements that are hard, dry, pebble-like **and** difficult to pass, your infant or child may be constipated.

Many children have some discomfort passing stools but produce a normal stool, therefore they do not have **do not have true constipation**. These children may still benefit from these recommendations.

Tips for healthy bowel movements

Ages 0-6 months

At this age, some infants may be constipated if they don't get enough fluids. Make sure your baby is gaining weight and soaking at least 6 diapers per day. **True constipation is rare in infants.**

What can you do:

Breastfed infants

- Offer the breast more often

Formula fed infants

- Offer bottles more frequently and/or increase the amount in bottle
- Add 1 tsp. (5 ml) corn syrup to one 8 oz. (250 ml) bottle of formula or breast milk per day.
- Offer sips of boiled cooled water, but do not exceed 2-4 oz. per day.

Iron fortified formula does not cause

Ages 6-12 months

Babies at this age may be constipated if they don't get enough fluid or fibre.

What can you do:

- Offer more breast milk or formula.
- Offer 1-2 oz. of water, 1-3 times per day.
- Offer more whole grains, vegetables and fruit such as pureed prunes.
- Offer brown rice, barley and oatmeal infant cereal
- Give undiluted fruit juice such as prune, pear or apple juice, up to 4 oz per day.

Ages 1 + years

Not enough fluids, not enough high-fibre foods and inactivity contribute to constipation in kids. Some children who are learning to use the toilet "hold in" their bowel movement because they are fearful of the toilet.

What can you do:

- Increase fluids. Offer water to quench thirst.
- Give undiluted fruit juice such as prune, pear or apple juice, up to 4 oz per day. Avoid fruit **drinks** whenever possible.
- Offer 16 oz. fluid milk daily. Whole milk should be given until 24 months.
- Offer more high-fibre foods. (See list on back).
- Promote physical activity with your children. Go for a walk together.
- Be flexible and relaxed during toilet teaching – this may ease your child's fears
- Provide your child with a firm foot support while on the potty. This position may make it more comfortable to pass a bowel movement.

constipation in infants.

Facts on fibre



Fibre is the part of food that our body cannot digest. It passes right through us and ends up in our stool. Fibre helps with constipation because it makes it easier to have a bowel movement.

Foods that are good sources of fibre are: cooked or raw fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, and legumes such as beans and lentils. Fibre can only be found in foods that come from plants. Meat, chicken, eggs, fish, milk & milk products do not have any fibre. Fibre in foods is more effective as a laxative so favour the fruit over the juice.

When increasing fibre, be sure to add water too. Water helps fibre do its job! Increase fibre slowly to avoid causing gas, cramps & bloating.

How much fibre is needed daily?

	Age (years)	Grams
Children	1 to 3	19
Children	4 to 8	25
Boys	9 to 13	31
Girls	9 to 13	26
Boys	14 to 18	38
Girls	14 to 18	36

Based on Dietary Reference Intakes 2002.

Fibre-containing foods from about 9 months and up:

	Grams fibre
Shreddies ® (1/2 cup)	3.1 g
Corn Bran ® (1/2 cup)	2.4 g
All Bran Flakes ® (1/2 cup)	2.2 g
Whole wheat bread (1/2 slice)	1 g
Whole wheat pasta (1/2 cup cooked)	3 g
Brown rice (1/2 cup cooked)	2 g
Apple sauce (1/2 cup)	1 g
Banana (1/2)	1 g
Blueberries, strawberries (1/2 cup)	2 g
Orange (1/2)	1.5 g
Canned Pear (1/2 cup)	2.6 g
Pureed prunes (1/2 cup)	4 g
Fruit juice (1/2 cup)	traces
Broccoli (1/2 cup)	2 g
Carrots (1/2 cup)	2 g
Peas (1/2 cup)	4 g
Mashed sweet potato (1/2 cup)	5 g
Bean salad (1/2 cup)	7 g
Lentil soup (1/2 cup)	3 g
Mini bran muffin (1)	1 g *
*egg whites after 12 months	
Sunflower seeds (1/4 cup shelled)	2 g

**Fibre amounts listed are approximate
Check Nutrition Facts on food packages**

Call the doctor when:

- Your infant is under six months of age and experiences hard painful bowel movements.
- You have tried the suggestions listed here and your child is still constipated.
- You find blood in the stool.

Do not give your child laxatives, enemas, suppositories or any medications without talking to your doctor first.