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# Constipation in Children

# Constipation can be common in children, although bowel patterns vary depending on the child. Most children have 1-2 bowel movements a day, while others may go 2-3 days before passing a normal stool. If your child is healthy and having stools without discomfort, this may be their normal bowel pattern. Be sure to contact your doctor if you have any concerns.

**Signs of a Not So Normal Bowel Pattern:**

* Poor appetite
* Difficulty or pain passing hard stools
* Stomach pain, nausea, cramping
* Changes in mood, crankiness
* Many days without bowel movements

**What Can Cause Constipation?**

* Holding in stool
* Illness, stress or changes in routine
* Too little fiber in the diet
* Not drinking enough fluids

**3 Steps to Preventing Constipation:**

1. **Drink enough water**

Drinking plenty of fluids every day helps digestion. It is recommended that children ages 1-5 years old drink at least 2 to 3 cups of water daily to make sure they are staying hydrated.

1. **Bump up the fiber**

Fiber helps keep things moving in the digestive tract. Take your child’s age and add 5 to get the

minimum number of grams of fiber they should get each day. For example, a 3-year-old should eat

at least 8 grams of fiber a day.

## Physical activity

Being active helps keep bowel movement regular. Help your child be active for a total of 60 minutes a day. Even 10 minutes at a time can help!

**Bump up the Fiber!**

**Get fiber from a variety of fruits, vegetables,**

**legumes and whole grains.**

**Ideas for high-fiber**

**meals and snacks:**

**Tips on adding more**

**fiber to your child’s diet:**

## Add high-fiber foods to every meal:

* + - Add berries to whole grain cereal and oatmeal
    - Add cucumbers or leafy greens to a sandwich
    - Add beans to soups, chili, salads and salsa
    - Add strips of zucchini to whole grain pasta, chopped spinach to omelets, and grated cauliflower to brown rice dishes

## Make half your grains whole:

* + - Make pancakes with whole wheat flour
    - Use whole wheat bread for French toast, and whole wheat tortillas for wraps

## Helpful tips when increasing fiber intake:

* + - Your child should drink water and fluids throughout the day. Too much fiber and not enough fluids may cause constipation.
    - Sometimes increasing fiber takes a little getting used to.

Start increasing foods with fiber slowly to prevent any discomfort.



## Breakfast

1 piece whole wheat French toast with ¼ cup of berries *(3g of fiber)*

## Snack

4 whole grain crackers with 1 oz. cheese

(*2 grams of fiber*)

## Lunch

Peanut butter and banana roll-up on a whole wheat tortilla *(5g of fiber)*

## Snack

½ cup of sliced cucumbers with 2 tablespoons of hummus *(1g of fiber)*

## Dinner

1 cup of chicken, broccoli, and whole wheat pasta *(5g of fiber)*

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