

# 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.

### 2. 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.

### 3. 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.



## Tips on adding more fiber to your child's diet:

### 1. 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

### 2. Make half your grains whole:

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

### 3. 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.

## Ideas for high-fiber meals and snacks:

### Breakfast

1 piece whole wheat French toast with  $\frac{1}{4}$  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

$\frac{1}{2}$  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)



1-800-WIC-1007



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

