

CONSTIPATION

Current Anticipatory guidance Recommendations and Education (CARE)

What is a Constipation?

- Constipation is pain or trouble when trying to poop (have a bowel movement)
- This can be caused by a back up of stool or poop
- Some kids have trouble pooping (also known as having a bowel movement) with hard or small stools, other kids have diarrhea or **may seem to have normal bowel movements**
- Some kids have very small or very large hard bowel movements, other kids may have diarrhea when they are constipated
- Some kids have bowel movements everyday others have bowel movements every few days and this may be normal if kids are not having pain or difficulty
- Some kids will have a tendency to get constipated while other kids may get constipated from certain foods as well as not enough fiber or water
- This can be a very long term problem and **may take a long time to get better**
- Some children may not want to eat as much and some may feel nauseous

What should I expect?

- Some kids have abdominal (belly) pain or discomfort when they are constipated
- Abdominal pain may come and go with constipation
- Difficulty having a bowel movement or spending a long time in the bathroom can be common
- Some kids have pain when they are trying to poop or have a bowel movement
- Some kids may even have small amounts of blood mixed in with the poop. This may come and go as well
- **Babies are still learning how to poop regularly** and sometimes appear to push and appear to have difficulties. This is not necessarily constipation and may be a normal part of development.

What can I do for my child?

Dietary Changes

- Eating right is very important to help with constipation
- Fruits and vegetables (5 servings a day) as well as high fiber (healthy grains - whole wheat) may help
- Foods such as chips, many snack foods, cookies, soda and highly processed foods may make constipation worse.

- Make sure your child **stays hydrated** by getting plenty of fluids like water, gatorade and pedialyte. Soda is not helpful for hydration.
- Decrease or avoid foods such as those high in Calcium (milk, cheese), processed snack foods (chips, chocolates, cookies)

Exercise

- **Exercise** may also help
- When babies struggle you can gently move your babies legs in a bicycle motion or rub their bellies in a clockwise motion

Habits

- Encourage good bowel movement habits: have them try to go to the bathroom **after meals**. If their feet don't touch the floor when sitting on the toilet give them a bench so they can push down
- Children should be encouraged to sit on the toilet for about 15 minutes
- Make sure your child has a place to go to the bathroom as school and encourage them to be comfortable having a bowel movement in school too.
- Small amount of blood in stools may mean your child has a small tear around the rectum known as a fissure. **Warm baths** and putting small amount of Vaseline on the area may help.
- Sometimes medications prescribed from your doctor may be needed or helpful

How long with my child be sick for?

- Constipation may be a long lasting problem that sometimes takes **weeks to months** to make completely normal
- Making sure your child is eating well as well as drinking well is very important
- Make sure your child is having bowel movements everyday that are not hard or small

When should I get immediate attention?

- All kids should **follow up with their regular doctors** a few days after being in the Emergency Department
- If your child is not improving in 3 days or is getting worse
- If your child has more than blood streaks in their stools or poop
- If your child is vomiting
- If your child has a fever
- If your child's belly pain changes or gets very bad
- If your child's belly pain does not come and go but is present all the time

Infants up to 4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 1 - 2 oz of apple, prune or pear juice each day.- Do not continue for more than 1 week- 1 oz of Karo syrup in 1 bottle per day
4 months and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4 oz of juice- Increase fruits and vegetables as well as bran and whole wheat grains