

Constipation

Your child has been diagnosed with constipation. This means your child is having bowel movements that are hard and more difficult to pass. Constipation may be caused by lack of exercise, low water intake, stress, recent illness, changes in your child's daily routine or a low fiber intake. It may also be caused by medicine your child is taking.

How is constipation treated?

Just as there may be many reasons why your child has become constipated, there are many ways to treat this problem. Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about the treatments listed below and will prescribe one or more for your child to follow.

1. Increase the amount of exercise your child gets each day.
2. Increase the amount of water your child drinks every day (does not apply to infants).
3. Limit foods low in fiber that may increase the risk for constipation. These foods include:
 - Milk (no more than 16 to 20 ounces a day and limit other dairy foods like cheese and ice cream)
 - Foods or snacks made from white sugar and white flour (cookies, cake and white bread)
 - Sugar-coated cereals
 - Unripe bananas
 - Candy including chocolate
 - Deep-fried foods
4. After each meal, have your child sit on the toilet for five minutes (a timer may be helpful). If your child's feet do not reach the floor, provide a stool to help make sitting more comfortable. This time should be made as pleasant as possible. Do not use punishment or threaten your child if a bowel movement does not happen.
5. Give your child foods that are high in fiber. Examples of high fiber foods include:

	Highest in Fiber	Other good choices
Breads and crackers	100% whole wheat, cracked wheat or bran bread and muffins	Graham crackers Any whole grain or rye crackers
Cereals	All Bran® or Raisin Bran® Bran Buds® Shredded Wheat® Corn Bran	Wheat germ Oatmeal or granola Bran flakes Any whole wheat cereal
Vegetables	Raw is best, but be sure to grate or grind raw vegetables as choking may be a danger if not chewed well. Corn (cream or whole kernel) Brussel sprouts Green beans	Celery Carrots Squash (with outer skin if zucchini)

Examples of high fiber foods (continued)

Vegetables (cont)	Highest in Fiber	Other good choices
	Cauliflower	Sweet potato
	Baked potato with skin	
	Green peas	
	Spinach or broccoli (raw, fresh cooked or frozen)	
Fruits	Any fresh fruit is good. The outer skin of fruits like apples and pears contain fiber. Remove the skin to prevent choking if your child is unable to chew it easily.	
	Apples	Pineapple
	Pears	Raisins
	Oranges	Nectarines
	Raspberries	Cranberries
	Figs, prunes (dried or stewed) or other dried fruits	
	Ripe bananas	
	Strawberries	
Nuts and seeds	Popcorn (popcorn should not be given to young children because of choking dangers)	
	Chunky peanut butter	
	All nuts (chop or grind the nuts as choking may be a danger if not chewed well)	
Beans and peas	Black-eyed or split peas	Black beans
	Baked beans	Garbanzo beans
	Pinto or lima beans	
	Kidney or white beans	
	Lentils	

6. Other treatments your child's health care provider may recommend include:

- Laxative.
- Enema.
- Stool softener.
- Suppository.

Do not use any of these treatments without specific directions from your child's health care provider.

7. Make an appointment in one week to see your child's health care provider so they can check on your child's progress.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has no bowel movement in 3 days.
- Starts to vomit.
- Has constipation that is getting worse.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.