

Constipation

What is constipation?

Constipation is when bowel motions ('poo') are hard, dry, difficult to pass, or happen less often than usual (less than three times per week). It can be a common problem, especially in younger children.

Your child may become constipated for many reasons, including:

- Not having enough fibre in their diet or not drinking enough fluids
- Not being active
- 'Holding in' their bowel motions because they don't want to use the toilet
- Certain medications

Tips to help with constipation:

1.	Add more fibre to your child's diet - see over for high fibre meal and snack suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Bread and crackers</u>: Choose wholemeal, wholegrain, brown, rye, granary or multigrain bread, wholemeal crackers and biscuits, brown or wholemeal scones • <u>Cereals</u>: Choose high fibre cereals such as wheat biscuits, bran flakes, muesli, shredded wholewheat • <u>Fruit and vegetables</u>: All fruit and vegetables contain fibre, so try to include at least five servings every day • <u>Rice/Pasta</u>: Choose wholemeal pasta, brown rice
2.	Make sure your child gets enough fluid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child needs 6-10 glasses of fluid every day • Good choices include water, milk and well diluted sugar-free squash
3.	Be more active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage your child to be active every day, doing things like playing outdoors, swimming, dancing, cycling, playing ball games • Regular exercise will help to improve the muscle tone of the digestive system and help your child feel well
4.	Have a regular toilet routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a set time each day, such as after meals, that your child sits on the toilet for 10 minutes • It might be helpful to distract them using books or blowing bubbles • A daily calendar with stars or stickers for each time your child has a bowel motion will help to encourage them

If your child's symptoms of constipation do not improve, you should talk to your doctor about other treatment options such as laxatives.

High Fibre Meal and Snack Suggestions

Breakfast

- High fibre breakfast cereal such as Weetabix[®], muesli, bran flakes or Shredded Wheat[®]
- Porridge with fruit
- Wholemeal brown bread with peanut butter and sliced banana



Lunch

- Homemade vegetable soup with wholemeal brown bread
- Wholemeal pasta salad with ham, cherry tomatoes and cucumber
- Wholemeal wraps or pitta breads with fillings such as tuna and sweetcorn or chicken and salad
- Baked beans on wholemeal toast



Dinner

- Include some vegetables with dinner each day, try to choose a variety of different types and colours such as carrots, broccoli, corn on the cob, spinach
- Choose brown rice and wholemeal pasta instead of white rice or white pasta
- Make homemade wedges or baked potatoes with the skins left on



Snacks

- Fruit – fresh or dried, such as apples, oranges, pears, kiwis, raisins – on its own or with some natural yoghurt
- Wholemeal crackers with cheese
- Popcorn
- Brown scone or two wholemeal biscuits such as digestives
- Homemade smoothie – fruit blended with some natural yoghurt or milk

