



CONSTIPATION

Constipation occurs when babies or children begin to have very, very hard stools (like little pebbles or rocks) and the bowel movement is painful. Some children don't have a bowel movement every day, so as long as their stool is soft and easy to pass when it occurs, then they do NOT have constipation.

Normal frequency of bowel movements by age:

First week of life: 4 or more bowel movements (BM's) per day. They are often soft or liquid.

First 3 months of life: 2 or more BM's a day; but some may only have 2 a week.

By age 2: at least 1 BM a day and should be soft but solid. Some may only have 2-3 per week.

Every child is different. Some may need to have a BM after each meal! Others a couple of times per week.

However, no child should go more than 7 days without a bowel movement.

If constipation occurs, they may have:

- significantly less BM's per week OR pain with each BM
- some small streaking of blood on their diaper or underwear (from trying to pass hard stool)
- decreased appetite
- arching of the back or crying with straining
- Leak small amounts of BM into the underwear (staining)

If your child seems to be constipated, here are some ways to help them: (note: it may take several days to weeks to loosen the stools and make your child more "regular" so be patient!)

- Eat more fruit, vegetables, cereal, and other foods high in fiber. Drink some prune juice, apple juice, or pear juice—even watered down. Be careful about giving too much.
- Give twice daily probiotic yogurt or probiotics you add to water or juice. Even a small amount can help regulate the bowels. (Activia™ is one example of a probiotic yogurt. Whole Foods™ also has a variety).
- For children over 12 months of age: increase water intake—especially here at altitude because it is so dry.
- For children over 12 months of age: avoid milk, cheese, and ice cream
- Sit on the toilet with a fun toy, book, or game for 5-10 minutes about 20-30 after meals.
- Stop potty training for a while until constipation resolves.
- For children less than 12 months who are straining a lot to pass a BM, sometimes rectal stimulation can help them pass the stool. Ask your Pediatric Provider to show you how to safely do this.
- Medications are a last resort.

When should you bring your child to the doctor?

- If your baby is younger than 4 months old
- If your child gets constipated often
- If you have tried the above measures without success
- There is a lot of blood noted on the diaper/underwear or in the stool or your child has a lot of pain.