Constipation in Children Over One Year of Age

Constipation is a change in a child's bowel habits. Constipation occurs when the stools are too hard, too infrequent, too painful, too large, or there is an inability to have a bowel movement at all.

SYMPTOMS

- Cramping with belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- Hard stool or painful bowel movements.
- Less than 1 stool in 3 days.
- Soiling of undergarments.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Check your child's bowel movements so you know what is normal for your child.
- If your child is toilet trained, have them sit on the toilet for 10 minutes following breakfast or until the bowels empty. Rest the child's feet on a stool for comfort.
- Do not show concern or frustration if your child is unsuccessful. Let the child leave the bathroom and try again later in the day.
- Include fruits, vegetables, bran, and whole grain cereals in the diet.
- A child must have fiber-rich foods with each meal (see Fiber Content of Foods Table).
- Encourage the intake of extra fluids between meals.
- Prunes or prune juice once daily may be helpful.
- Encourage your child to come in from play to use the bathroom if they have an urge to have a bowel movement. Use rewards to reinforce this.
- If your caregiver has given medication for your child's constipation, give this medication every day. You may have to adjust the amount given to allow your child to have 1 to 2 soft stools every day.
- To give added encouragement, reward your child for good results. This means doing a small favor for your child when they sit on the toilet for an adequate length (10 minutes) of time even if they have not had a bowel movement.
  - The reward may be any simple thing such as getting to watch a favorite TV show, giving a sticker or keeping a chart so the child may see their progress.
  - Using these methods, the child will develop their own schedule for good bowel habits.
- **Do not** give enemas, suppositories, or laxatives unless instructed by your child's caregiver.
- **Never** punish your child for soiling their pants or not having a bowel movement. This will only worsen the problem.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is bright red blood in the stool.
- The constipation continues for more than 4 days.
- There is abdominal or rectal pain along with the constipation.
- There is continued soiling of undergarments.
- You have any questions or concerns.

Fiber Content of Foods

Drinking plenty of fluids and consuming foods high in fiber can help with constipation. See the list below for the fiber content of some common foods.

Food Group	Food Item	Amount	Grams of Fiber
Starches and Grains	Cheerios	1 Cup	3
	Kellogg's Corn Flakes	1 Cup	0.7
	Rice Krispies	1 ¼ Cup	0.3
	Quaker Oat Life Cereal	¾ Cup	2.1
	Oatmeal, instant (cooked)	½ Cup	2
	Kellogg's Frosted Mini Wheats	1 Cup	5.1
	Rice, brown, long-grain (cooked)	1 Cup	3.5
	Rice, white, long-grain (cooked)	1 Cup	0.6
	Macaroni, cooked, enriched	1 Cup	2.5
Legumes	Beans, baked, canned, plain or vegetarian	½ Cup	5.2
	Beans, kidney, canned	½ Cup	6.8
	Beans, pinto, dried (cooked)	½ Cup	7.7
	Beans, pinto, canned	½ Cup	5.5
Breads and Crackers	Graham crackers, plain or honey	2 squares	0.7
	Saltine crackers	3	0.3
	Pretzels, plain, salted	10 pieces	1.8
	Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	1.9
	Bread, white	1 slice	0.7
	Bread, raisin	1 slice	1.2
	Bagel, plain	3 oz	2
	Tortilla, flour	1 oz	0.9
	Tortilla, corn	1 small	1.5
	Bun, hamburger or hotdog	1 small	0.9
Fruits	Apple, raw with skin	1 medium	4.4
	Applesauce, sweetened	½ Cup	1.5
	Banana	½ medium	1.5
	Grapes	10 grapes	0.4
	Orange	1 small	2.3
	Raisin	1.5 oz	1.6
	Melon	1 Cup	1.4
Vegetables	Green beans, canned	½ Cup	1.3
	Carrots (cooked)	½ Cup	2.3
	Broccoli (cooked)	½ Cup	2.8
	Peas, frozen (cooked)	½ Cup	4.4
	Potatoes, mashed	½ Cup	1.6
	Lettuce	1 Cup	0.5
	Corn, canned	½ Cup	1.6
	Tomato	½ Cup	1.1

Information taken from the USDA National Nutrient Database, 2008.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.