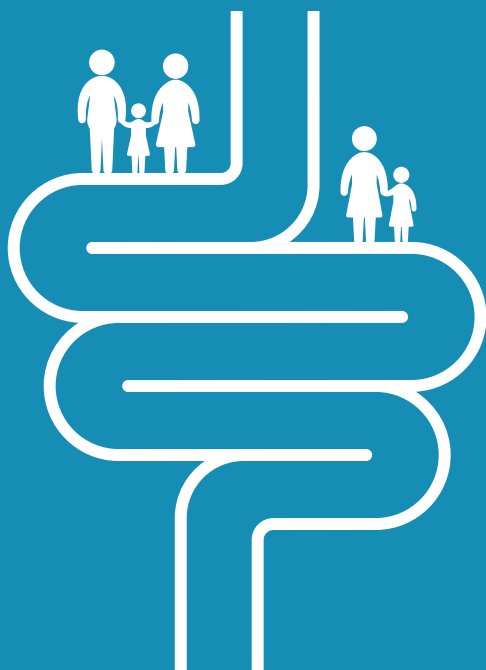


MANAGING CONSTIPATION

A guide for parents










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WHAT IS CONSTIPATION?

Constipation happens when your child does not have a poo often enough, or they don't fully empty their bowels when they do have a poo. It is a common problem, affecting 1 in 3 children at any one time, but there are things that you can do to help ease it.

Your child may be constipated if:

- They have done less than 3 poos in the last week
- They have pain and are straining when doing a poo
- Their poo is large and hard - sometimes this can cause some bleeding
- Their poo looks like little pellets (like "rabbit droppings")
- They don't feel hungry, or have stomach ache, when they haven't had a poo
- Their poo looks like type 1-3 in the table below

Stool type	Description
Type 1 	Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
Type 2 	Sausage-shaped but lumpy
Type 3 	Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
Type 4 	Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft - the ideal poo
Type 5 	Soft blobs with clear cut edges
Type 6 	Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
Type 7 	Watery, no solid pieces. Entirely liquid

WHAT CAUSES CONSTIPATION?

There are many different reasons that your child may be constipated, but it isn't always obvious what the cause of it is.

The most common causes include:

- Not eating enough fibre, which is found in fruits, vegetables, beans, pulses and cereals
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Potty training - feeling pressured to go to the loo or being interrupted whilst they are trying to go
- Feeling worried or anxious
- Holding poo in when they need to go - for example, using the toilets at school or nursery

Remember, constipation is very common, and can affect 1 in 3 children in the UK

Treatment for constipation in children depends on their age, and getting help early is important. If you think your child may be constipated, it is important that you take them to see a GP. Your GP may suggest fibre supplementation or medication, alongside changes to your child's diet and fluid intake.

There are some simple things that you can do at home that could help prevent your child from becoming constipated and to help resolve it.

WHAT MIGHT HELP?

1 Increase their dietary fibre

Having regular meals, and increasing your child's fibre intake as part of a healthy, balanced diet, can help. The amount of fibre your child needs increases as they get older:

Above 2 years of age - 15g per day

Primary school age - 20g per day

Secondary school age - 25g per day

Fibre is found in plant-based foods, and moves through the bowel undigested. It adds bulk and softens stools, to help move things through the bowel more easily.

Help increase your child's fibre intake by:

- Aim for your child to have at least 5 portions of fruit and veg each day. These can be fresh, tinned in juice, or frozen
- Choosing wholemeal or wholegrain bread, wraps, breadsticks and crackers
- Encourage wholegrain breakfast cereals - look for "high fibre" on the packet (at least 6g per 100g)
- Offer oat based cereal bars and biscuits e.g. flapjacks
- Keep a supply of frozen vegetables and fruit, to make it quick and easy to add into meals
- Keep the skin on fruits and vegetables
- Add extra vegetables, beans and pulses into pasta sauces, soups and casseroles
- Choose wholegrain pasta and brown rice
- Look for foods with at least 3g of fibre per 100g

Eating a wide range of different fibres can:



Prevent constipation



Enhance immunity



Reduce inflammation in your gut

Simple food swaps



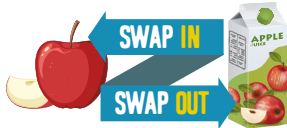
Wholegrain pasta

White pasta



Wholegrain bread

White bread



Fresh piece of fruit with skin on

Fruit Juice



Wheat biscuits or wholegrain cereal

Cornflakes

2 Increase their fluid intake

Encourage your child to drink 6-8 drinks each day.



This doesn't just have to be water though. Juice, squash, milk and sugar free drinks can all be part of them having the required fluid intake.



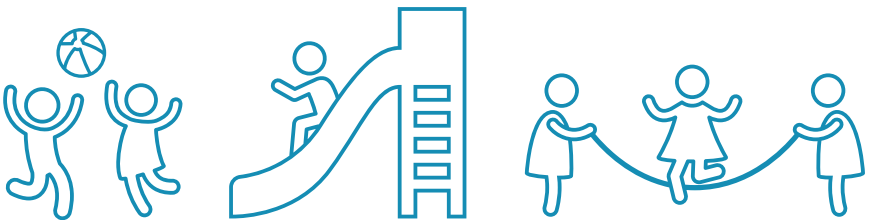
WHAT MIGHT HELP?

3 Keep them active

Being physically active helps to support your child's bowel function. Exercise will not only help strengthen the abdominal muscles and stimulate the bowel (helping to move poo along), it can also reduce stress which is a known constipation trigger.

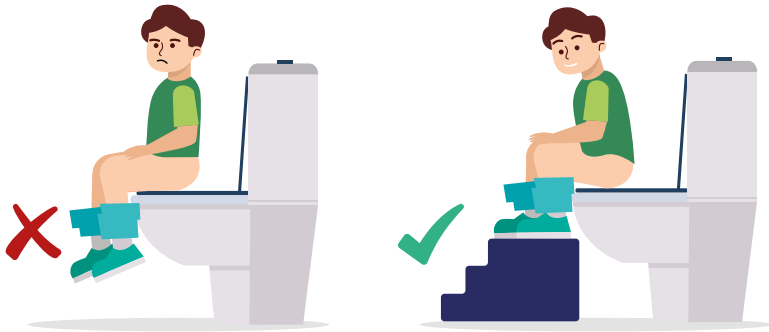
NHS recommendations

- Children under 5 years of age should spend at least 3 hours per day being physically active
- For those over 5, two types of activity each day for at least one hour is recommended
- Activities can include walking to school, playground activities, football, swimming, or strengthening exercises like gymnastics, yoga and jumping



4 Toileting routines

- Try to encourage regular, unhurried toilet routines. For example, after meals or before bed, and praise them whether they poo or not
- Encourage your child to visit the toilet as soon as they feel the sensation of needing to have a poo
- Helping your child relax on the toilet helps. Toys, books and games can help with this
- Make sure their feet are supported with a stool, and their knees are above their hips if possible



Useful resources

There are a range of online websites and resources that can provide you with advice and support for managing constipation.

ERIC

eric.org.uk

ERIC is the national charity dedicated to improving children's bowel and bladder health, whose mission is to reduce the impact of continence problems on children and their families.

Bladder & Bowel UK

www.bbuk.org.uk

Working to improve awareness and find solutions to bladder and bowel problems across the nation.

NHS

www.nhs.uk/conditions/constipation

Nutribytes

www.youtube.com/@nutribytes2532

A team of dietitians, who aim to provide resources and content that are easy to read and understand. This includes short, bite-sized videos. Look for "Managing adult constipation" and "Childhood constipation" videos.

Nutrinovo

nutrinovo.com/patient-resources