



319 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115 • 617-277-7320 • 617-277-7834 (f) • www.longwoodpeds.com

Constipation:

Children with constipation often have stools that are dry, hard, and difficult or painful to get out. Constipation typically presents with changes in stool frequency, consistency or size. Constipation is very common and treatable.

Signs of constipation include:

- Hard/painful stools
- Small ball-like stools
- Decrease in appetite
- Many days between stooling
- Straining to push stool out or clenching to keep stool in due to pain
- Bleeding from the bottom where stool comes out
- Stomach pain, cramps, nausea
- Brown wet spots on the underwear
- Large stools that clog the toilet
- Children with constipation may even have diarrhea

What causes constipation?

- Nutrition/hydration: Insufficient fluid or fiber can make your child constipated.
- Behavior:
 - Ignoring urges to stool (too busy), incomplete stool/emptying (not wanting to spend long enough on the toilet), withholding (due to painful stooling), location (not wanting to stool at school for example).
- Biology: Slowed ability of the gut to move contents through digestive tract. Rarely, other diseases can cause constipation.

It is important to help your child develop healthy bowel habits. Some suggestions:

- Have your child sit on the toilet for 10 minutes at least after each meal whether or not your child says they need to use the bathroom or not
- Give a small reward (like a sticker) after toilet-sitting whether he or she has a bowel movement or not

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- Keep track of your child’s bowel movements with a stool diary (this gives you and the provider more information)
- Maintain a positive and calm attitude, even if you child has accidents. Scolding can be stressful and make the problem worse.
- It is important to make sure that your child always drinks plenty of water and has plenty of foods with fiber like fruit, vegetables, beans and whole grains. It is also important to encourage lots of physical activity.

Notes on Treatment:

Constipation can get worse if left untreated. The longer the stool is in the body the dryer and harder it gets and thus the more painful it is to pass. This starts a vicious cycle! The child becomes afraid to have a bowel movement and so holds it in even more, worsening the situation.

As first line treatment for mild constipation, daily prune or pear juice and daily fiber supplements like Benefiber may be used. Sometimes, if constipation has gone on too long or has worsened a “clean out” or a treatment to remove all of the stored up stool may be necessary. A clean out generally occurs over 2-3 days. Once the clean out has occurred, a maintenance plan may be used. Maintenance plans may be used for weeks or even months.

Clean-out Plan:

AM	√	PM	√
<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet sitting for 10 mins after breakfast		<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet sitting for 10 mins after dinner	
<input type="checkbox"/> Miralax ____ cap(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> Miralax ____ cap(s)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ex-lax chocolate square (senna) ____ square(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> Ex-lax chocolate square (senna) ____ square(s)	
Other:		Other:	



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Maintenance Plan:

AM	√	PM	√
<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet sitting for 10 mins after breakfast		<input type="checkbox"/> Toilet sitting for 10 mins after dinner	
<input type="checkbox"/> Miralax ____ capfuls(s)		<input type="checkbox"/> Miralax ____ capfuls(s)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiber supplement (e.g. Benefiber)		<input type="checkbox"/> Fiber supplement (e.g. Benefiber)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Prune/pear juice		<input type="checkbox"/> Prune/pear juice	

Recommended viewing:

The Poo in You video on Youtube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgBj7Mc_4sc

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