

What is constipation?

Constipation happens when a child does not open their bowels (does not do a poo) often enough. When this happens, the poo becomes dry and hard and may hurt when it does come out. There are also some children who might poo every day, yet are not emptying their bowel properly and only passing small amounts. These children can also be suffering from constipation. Other symptoms of constipation include soiling or overflow diarrhoea - this is caused by liquid poo passing around a hard blockage of poo. There is often associated tummy pain and your child may also have a poor appetite, lack of energy, or irritable mood.

How can I help my child?

- Ensure your child is drinking enough fluid, particularly as water. Aim for 6-8 drinks per day.
- Ensure your child has plenty of fibre – good sources of fibre include fruit, vegetables, baked beans, high fibre bread, wholemeal cereals
- Encourage your child to be active and exercise.
- Establish regular relaxed toileting – encourage them to sit on the toilet for 5 minutes approximately 20 minutes after a meal, allowing plenty of time so they don't feel rushed. Make sure they are comfortable: when using the toilet, your child should be able to rest their feet flat on a step so that their knees are higher than their hips and lean forward slightly. Make sure you praise all efforts, even sitting on the toilet, but do not punish accidents.
- If your child has been prescribed any medication, they should take this as advised.

The most commonly prescribed medication in the Emergency Department is Movicol® for small children and Laxido® for older children. These are powders taken mixed with a glass of water. They work by keeping the water that they are drunk with inside the bowel. This softens the poo and makes it easier to pass. They are used in increasing doses until the child is passing soft, painless, regular poos. It is important to follow the instructions on the packet when mixing them with water. If the powder is not flavoured, you can add juice or squash after it has been mixed with water.

Continued on page 2

When should I get advice?

Your child should be reviewed by their GP in about one week to assess the effect of any treatment and so that more laxative medication can be prescribed.

Please contact 111 or your GP if:

- you are worried about your child
- your child is vomiting, or
- your child has severe pain

Your Health Visitors or School Nurses can give further advice and support.

The charity 'ERIC' has lots more information <http://www.eric.org.uk/>
Telephone 0845 370 8008.

Notes:

Are you a victim of Domestic Violence? For confidential advice, contact:

Bradford	0808 2800 999	https://www.stayingput.uk.net/contact
North Yorkshire	03000 110 110	https://www.idas.org.uk/
Lancashire	0300 323 0085	https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/domestic-abuse/

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

Author: Emergency Department
Date of publication: July 2019
Revised: February 2022
Date of review: February 2025

www.airedaletrust.nhs.uk