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[www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com](http://www.eastlouisvillepediatrics.com)

## **CONSTIPATION**

### **The First Year of Life**

- ✓ Before we talk about constipation, we should decide what it is when a child's stool pattern is abnormal. Newborn babies may have a bowel movement with every feeding (up to 8-10 times per day), while others may normally have three or four bowel movements a day. Some breastfed babies can go as long as a week between bowel movements. All young infants during the first few months of life will strain and get red in the face when they try to have a bowel movement. This does not mean anything is wrong. If your baby's stools are soft, and he/she is feeding well, is happy, with frequent wet diapers, be reassured that infrequent stools can be in the range of normal.
- ✓ If the stools are hard and infrequent and the baby has pain, difficulty or bleeding from the rectum when his/her bowels move, the baby may be constipated. At this point, the baby should be checked in our office.
- ✓ Outlined below are some of the things we recommend for constipated babies.
- ✓ For infants older than one month of age, give your baby pear or prune juice. Begin with one or two teaspoons per day and increase by one teaspoon daily until you get up to two ounces or unless stools become softer.
- ✓ Offer strained prunes (in age appropriate babies). Begin with one teaspoon, increase up to one half jar daily.
- ✓ If you are using clear Karo syrup in the bottle, change it to brown Karo syrup in equal amounts. This acts somewhat like a detergent and keeps the stools from becoming so tightly packed. It usually takes several days for it to help.
- ✓ Cut down on the amount of formula that you are giving and increase the intake of fruits and vegetables (in babies older than four months of age), especially pears, peaches and prunes. Remember "P" fruits = more "P"oop! Other high fiber foods include oatmeal cereal, peas and apricots.



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### **The Second Year of Life**

- ✓ Constipation in this age group is often troublesome and can cause hard and painful stools. Especially in the child at two years of age, it may make him/her afraid to sit on the potty, and may slow down toilet training. The treatment measures listed below should be instituted.
- ✓ Make sure the child is consuming no more than 16-24 ounces of milk a day, and the constipation problem may be rapidly eliminated.
- ✓ Encourage more fruits, vegetables and bran cereals.
- ✓ Encourage more water daily.
- ✓ If stools remain very hard, painful or impacted, make an appointment for your child to be checked.

### **Infant Nutrition**

As you already know, theories on infant nutrition have changed rather drastically over the last few years, and for many scientifically proven reasons. We, as your baby's healthcare providers, have chosen to follow the guidelines set forth by the Committee on Infant Nutrition of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Essentially, the recommendations are total breast milk or formula feedings for a period of at least 12 months with the introduction of solids at 4-6 months of age.

The need for a vitamin supplementation will be determined by whether your baby is breast fed or bottle fed. If you are nursing, your baby will be placed on vitamins in the first month of life, to supplement their need for Vitamin D. If you are formula feeding, the vitamins are in the formula.

We understand that as new parents you'll be given all kinds of well-meaning advice with regards to your baby's diet. Remember that total infant nutrition, with just formula or breast milk for the "beginning" months of life until 4-6 months of age is thought to be best.

Please remember to be flexible. Most babies take a period of "getting used to" solids, so do not be discouraged if your baby's appetite varies. By 4 months of age, babies can turn their head to signal they are full, so use your judgment and follow your baby's signals as to amount. In short, be patient when introducing solids into your baby's diet.



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### **When to Call Your Doctor for Constipation**

Call your Doctor now (night or day) if:

- ✓ Your child looks or acts very sick.
- ✓ Persistent abdominal pain longer than one hour (includes persistent crying).
- ✓ Persistent rectal pain longer than one hour (includes persistent straining).
- ✓ Vomiting more than three times in the last two hours.
- ✓ Age less than one month old and breastfed.
- ✓ Age less than 12 months with recent onset of weak cry, weak suck or weak muscles.

Call your Doctor within 24 hours (after 7:30 a.m. & before 4:30 p.m.) if:

- You think your child needs to be seen.
- Age less than two months.
- Bleeding from anal fissures (tears).

Call your Doctor during weekday office hours (M-F 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. & Sat 7:30 to 12) if:

- You have other questions or concerns.
- Child may be “blocked up”.
- Leaking stool.
- Suppository or enema needed recently to relieve pain.
- Days between bowel movements longer than three while eating a non-constipating diet.  
(EXCEPTION: normal if breastfed infant older than two months AND bowel movements are NOT painful).
- Toilet training is in progress.
- Constipation is a recurrent ongoing problem.