

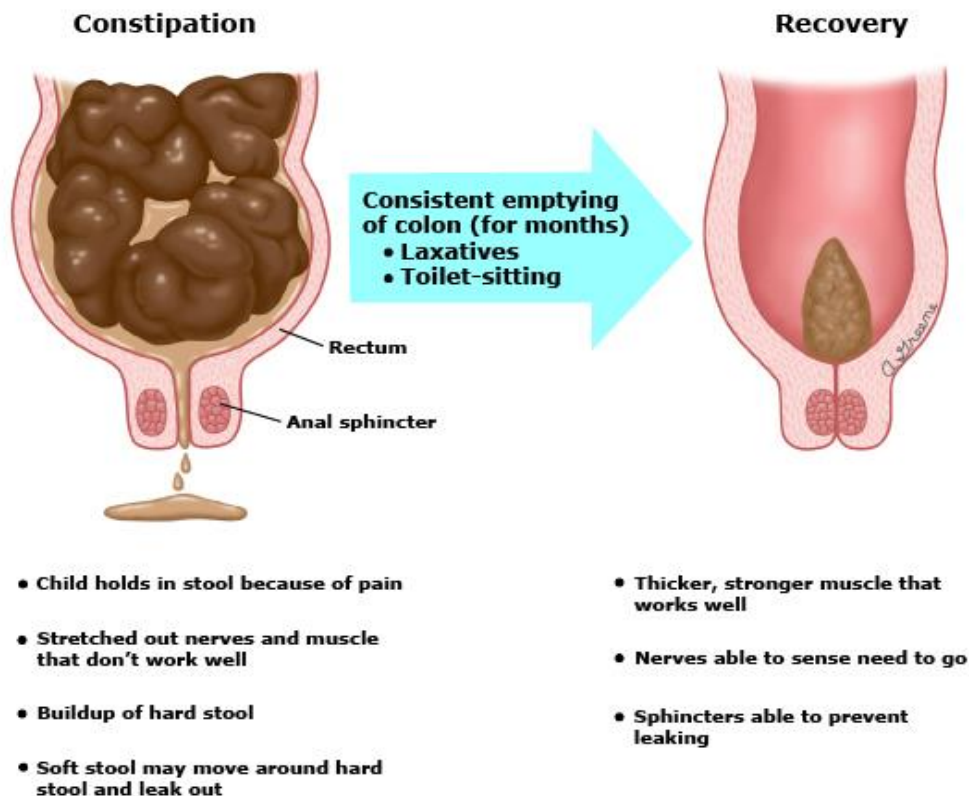
Constipation

What is constipation?

‘The inability to do a poo regularly or to completely empty the bowel’ – ERIC website.

Some people think that constipation is not being able to do a poo but it is a more complex issue and stool type, frequency of passing a stool or the size of a stool can all indicate constipation.

Constipation can be uncomfortable and upsetting for some children.



Signs of constipation

- Passing fewer than 3 stools per week
- Having dry cracked stools or loose unformed poos
- Pain or discomfort when having a poo
- Stomach ache

- Soiling in pants
- Withholding (holding in a poo instead of passing it) – there are lots of reasons for withholding but constipation may be a factor

How constipation effects enuresis:

When the bowel is full of poo it presses on the bladder and takes up a lot of the internal space, which means the bladder cannot stretch to its full size.

When is the best time to try and have a poo?

30 minutes after eating.

Bowel messages and how constipation effects them:

The bowel sends messages to the brain via the spinal cord that the bowel needs to be emptied when the rectum stretches.

When a child is constipated the rectum stretches to accommodate the large amount of stools. If the rectum is stretched all the time the messages to the brain are reduced or not sent at all and the bowel then stretches to accommodate the large amount of poo that has not been passed.

What does a healthy poo look like?

A type 4 (soft & sausage like) small – medium size poo.

Minimum of 4 times a week to a maximum 3 times a day.

Bristol stool chart

THE BRISTOL STOOL CHART (SCALE FOR ADULTS)		
choose your Poo!		
type 1		looks like rabbit droppings Separate lumps, difficult to pass
type 2		looks like bunch of grapes Moist, soft but lumpy
type 3		looks like corn on cob Soft, moist and with cracks on the surface
type 4		looks like sausage Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
type 5		looks like chicken nuggets Soft stools with clear cut edges (broken apart)
type 6		looks like porridge Softly moist with ragged edges, a little lumpy
type 7		looks like gravy Wet, no solid pieces (PUREST FORM)

What is a clear out regime?

If the bowel is impacted (a large mass of stools that gets stuck so it can't be pushed out) the bowel needs to be fully cleared out of poo. This is done by having a high dose of laxatives which is then reduced down as the bowel is emptied. Your GP will advise on the doses required.

Treatment for constipation

The best treatment for constipation in children are Macrogols such as Movicol, Cosmocool and Laxido.

How do macrogols work?

They work by keeping water in the poo which keeps it soft and makes it easier to push out.

How to prepare macogols

The sachet should be mixed with the correct amount of water (this is the active ingredient and the macrogol won't work without it) as directed on the packet and stirred until clear.

What can you mix the macrogol medication with?

Once the medication is prepared it can then be diluted further or added to any food types such as dilute orange juice, gravy etc.

How long to continue with laxative treatment?

The GP will advise on how long to continue with treatment. Some children will need a low dose of laxative for a long period of time to ensure they do not become constipated again.

What else can help?

Diet

Fibre is an essential nutrient for normal functioning of the gut. It is part of a healthy diet which includes all food groups:

1. Starchy foods such as bread, rice, potatoes and pasta
2. Fruit and vegetables
3. Milk and dairy foods such cheese and yoghurts
4. Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

How much fibre does my child need?

- Children (5-11 years) 20g
- Children (11-16 years) 25g
- Adolescents (16-18 years) 30g

Some of the best food choices for fibre are:

- starchy foods: porridge, oat bran, high fibre breakfast cereals, sweet potato, potato with skin, wholemeal or wholegrain bread and pasta
- beans and pulses such as baked beans, hummus and dahl
- vegetables: peas, parsnip, mixed veg (from frozen), green beans, carrot, canned sweetcorn and broccoli
- fruits: pear, apple, raspberries and blackberries, plums and prunes, banana and orange
- seeds and chia seeds nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts and peanut butter (do not give whole nuts to children under 3 due to the risk of choking)

Tips on how to increase your fibre

- ✓ Have a high-fibre cereal at breakfast.
- ✓ Add fruit to breakfast cereal.
- ✓ Have an oat-based cereal bar as a snack (be aware of sugar content - check the label).
- ✓ Have a wholemeal sandwich at lunch with carrot sticks and hummus.
- ✓ Try a homemade vegetable soup with wholemeal bread.
- ✓ Have wholemeal pasta with vegetables at dinner time.
- ✓ Add pulses such as baked beans and lentils to dishes.
- ✓ Add extra vegetables to sauces such as bolognese, curry and chilli.
- ✓ Keep a supply of frozen vegetables so you are never without!
- ✓ Leave the skin on vegetables and fruit and aim to have five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- ✓ Have fresh fruit as a snack.
- ✓ Blend together some fruit and milk/yogurt for a refreshing smoothie.
- ✓ Other snack ideas include an oat-based cereal bar, trail mix, popcorn or a slice of wholemeal toast

Good fluid intake

6 – 8 water based drinks spread throughout the day or follow the drinking regime.

Exercise

Increases the speed at which food moves through the large intestine so less water is removed from the stool by the body. Exercise also stimulates heart rate and breathing which 2

Toileting routines

Sitting on the toilet for 5 – 10 minutes to try and pass a poo 30 minutes after eating breakfast and 30 minutes after eating tea.

Toilet position: Feet flat on either the floor or a stool, leaning slightly forward.



- Feeling relaxed will help pass a stool so having plenty of time in a comfortable bathroom environment with privacy if needed will help.
- Distraction such as a book to read, tablet to watch or toys to play with help your child relax.
- Massaging the tummy in clockwise circles can help.
- Rocking back and forth on toilet can also help.

Further information

Link to ERIC website video on constipation:

<https://www.eric.org.uk/videos-about-wee-and-poo>

Link to the Bladder & Bowel UK website:

<https://www.bbuk.org.uk/children-young-people/children-bowel/>

References

BBUK: <https://www.bbuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Macrogols.pdf>

BDA food fact sheet: fibre: <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/fibre.html>

BDA food fact sheet: healthy eating for children: <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-eating-for-children.html>

ERIC: Guide to children's bowel problems: <https://eric.org.uk/childrens-bowels/>

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/constipation-in-infants-and-children-beyond-the-basics/print>