

Pediatric Urology Associates, Ltd.

& Pediatric Enuresis Center of Arizona

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CONSTIPATION

Constipation can be defined as infrequent passage of stool. Painful bowel movements and stool retention can be symptoms of constipation even when stool frequency is greater than three times per week. Encopresis, or incontinence of stool, is common in children with chronic constipation.

Constipation is very common in children with urinary tract infections, daytime wetting and nighttime wetting. Treatment of constipation includes education, prevention of impaction, promotion of regular bowel habits and toilet training in older children. Constipation is not a life-threatening condition. However, several months to years of supportive intervention may be required for effective treatment.

Daily bowel movements are a mainstay in treating constipation. The goal for your child is a soft bowel movement every day. You may help your child attain this goal by providing a daily stool time (ideally, 15 to 20 minutes after eating to take advantage of the gastrocolic reflex). Do not rush - allow your child plenty of time in the bathroom - usually 5 -10 minutes. Help your child keep a stool diary - When they have a bowel movement, make note of the consistency, soft or hard.

There are several treatments for constipation. There are several dietary measures that can improve constipation. Most important is increasing fluid intake. It is important to drink enough water to maintain clear or light yellow urine. Some foods can help constipation while there are others that should be avoided.

Examples of foods to add or increase in your child's diet include, but are not limited to:

1. Fruit juices, i.e. prune, pear, plum, pineapple, peach, papaya, apricot, orange, or apple.
2. Vegetables, either raw or cooked (eat the peels as often as you can).
3. Fruits (eat the peels as often as you can).
4. Bran cereal, bran muffins, raisin bran.

Examples of foods that may worsen constipation include:

1. Dairy products, i.e. milk, cheese, ice cream.
2. Bananas.
3. Rice or rice cereal.
4. Pastas white breads, potatoes.

Keep in mind that dietary factors alone will probably not alleviate chronic constipation if stool withholding and stool retention are a problem.

In many children, supplements to the diet may be prescribed to produce daily bowel movements. These include either magnesium citrate, Miralax, mineral oil, or Milk of Magnesia. Miralax , or polyethylene glycol, works by holding onto water and making the stool softer. When mixed in water, juice, or soda MiraLax has no discernible taste. Dosages will be determined by your physician.

Management of constipation requires considerable patience and effort on both the child's and the parent's part. Providing support and encouragement during the treatment period is extremely important. Telephone consultation or an office visit may be required until appropriate laxative dosage has been established, as dosage adjustments may be required.