

CT Children's CLASP Guideline Family Handout

Constipation

What is constipation?

Constipation is when there are fewer or harder bowel movements (poops) than usual. It is very common in children.

How do I know that my child may have constipation?

Signs that your child may have constipation include:

- Passing bowel movements less frequently
- Passing hard bowel movements on a regular basis
- Straining and/or having pain when passing a bowel movement
- Having repeated stooling accidents (may be on purpose *or* by accident)
- Refusing to sit on the toilet or potty to pass a bowel movement
- Showing behaviors that help your child hold in their bowel movements ("withholding behaviors"):
 - Crossing legs, walking on tips of toes, dancing or shaking
 - Crying and/or hiding when it is time to pass a bowel movement
 - Abruptly leaving a current activity into a different space to pass a bowel movement

How can I treat my child's constipation?

To treat constipation, it is helpful to make some changes to your child's daily routine and behaviors so that it is easier for your child to pass a bowel movement.

- Changes to diet:
 - Add more water
 - Add more fiber with healthy vegetables and fruits
- Use positive reinforcement when your child passes a stool (for example, celebrate with words like "great job" and "I'm so proud of you")
- Use a non-judgmental approach to setbacks (for example, do not punish or scold your child for accidents)
- Develop a rewards system (for example, stickers or prizes) for persistently overcoming fears (like sitting on a toilet) or for passing a stool in the toilet
- Schedule toilet sitting if withholding behaviors are present (for example, when wakes and after meals)
- Follow your pediatrician's plan of care

Bowel Management Tool

Date	Time of day	Your best estimate of stool size (small, medium, large)	What does stool look most like? (choose 1-7 from pictures below)	Did your child stool in toilet? (Yes/No)	Any straining or pain with stooling? (Yes/No)	Any blood in stool? (Yes/No)	Withholding (holding in bowel movement)? (Yes/No)	What medication(s), if any, were taken to help the constipation?	List any other comments here

Bristol Stool Chart

1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
2		Sausage-shaped but lumpy
3		Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface
4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges
6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
7		Watery, no solid pieces, entirely liquid