



Constipation

Stool patterns may vary greatly in normal children. One bowel movement (BM) daily is the average, but many may go more frequently or only once every two to three days. An infant or child is constipated when his stool is very hard and has great difficulty passing it. This can normally be prevented with good dietary habits.

Babies often make a big fuss when having a bowel movement. This does not mean they are constipated. If a small baby has gone longer than usual between BMs and seems to be straining, he may be constipated. For older infants, fruits (especially prunes) should be emphasized in the diet. Occasionally, an infant glycerin suppository may be used for acute discomfort. Please call our office if you feel this is needed. If you find yourself using suppositories frequently, an office visit is indicated.

Toddlers and older children may temporarily become constipated when their usual diet and schedule are interrupted, such as during an illness or traveling. Older children will respond overnight to a tablespoonful of Milk of Magnesia or a Dulcolax tablet. Both preparations are available without prescription.

Older children with persistent constipation should be given a diet high in fiber such as whole grain breads, bran, and fresh vegetables. Such high fiber requires lots of liquids daily. A pediatric Fleets enema may be given for severe constipation and mineral oil may be used to maintain good bowel habits. An office visit is recommended before using these measures.
