

Keeping Baby Healthy:

Constipation in babies younger than 12 months old

Signs of Constipation:

Bowel Movements

- Are hard and dry
- May look like marbles
- May be blood-streaked

Baby

- Has fewer bowel movements than normal
- Cries when having a bowel movement
- May refuse to eat
- May spit up more than usual
- Strains for more than 10 minutes without having a bowel movement

What to Know:

A baby normally strains, pushes and turns red when having a bowel movement. This is not constipation.

- The number of bowel movements a baby has may change from day to day.

Breastfed Babies

- A breastfed baby may have a bowel movement with each feeding, or the baby may only have one bowel movement every few days.

A breastfed baby typically has bowel movements that:

- Are yellow, loose and pass with force
- May have lumps that look like cottage cheese
- Do not smell bad.

Formula-Fed Babies or Babies Who Receive Breast Milk and Formula

- A baby that drinks infant formula may have three or four bowel movements a day, or the baby may only have a bowel movement every few days.

A baby that drinks infant formula typically has bowel movements that:

- Are yellow, green or brown in color
- Are mushy
- May smell bad

What **NOT** to Do:

If baby has true constipation:

- Do not use honey or corn (karo) syrup.
- Do not give bananas—they can make bowel movements harder.
- Do not use suppositories, laxatives or enemas unless your baby's health care provider tells you to.

What to Do if Baby Has True Constipation:

- You may give 1 or 2 tablespoons of prune, pear or apple juice in 4 ounces of water between regular feedings.
- If baby is older than 6 months, give fruits such as stewed prunes, pears, peaches, and apricots.
- You may need to avoid citrus fruits like oranges or pineapple because they may be too acidic for baby.

Call Your Baby's Health Care Provider If:

- This advice does not help within 2 days.
- There is blood in baby's bowel movement or diaper.
- Baby is vomiting.
- Baby seems to be having a lot of tummy pain or tummy looks larger than usual.

Division of Children's Health
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