

# Relieving your child's constipation

---

## What is constipation?

Constipation means your child has fewer bowel movements (stools, poo) than usual. The bowel movements may be hard and dry, and difficult or painful to pass. As the stool builds up, your child may get stomach cramps and pain.

Constipation is a common problem that can be treated.

## How often should my child have a bowel movement? What is normal?

Every child is different. Most children have a bowel movement 1 or 2 times a day. Some children may go 2 or 3 days between bowel movements.

What matters most is that your child has regular bowel movements that are soft and easy to pass, without straining or pain.

## What are the signs of constipation?

- fewer bowel movements than usual
  - hard bowel movements
  - bowel movements are difficult to pass or painful
  - very large bowel movements
  - blood with bowel movements
  - soiled underwear
  - stomach cramps or pain
  - stomach (abdomen or belly) looks swollen
  - irritability or unexplained change in behaviour
  - poor appetite
-

## What causes constipation?

- not drinking enough water
- not eating enough fibre
- eating large amounts of cheese and milk products
- changes in your child's diet
- some medications
- painful bowel movements
- holding in or refusing to have bowel movements
- feeding or swallowing problems
- excess sweating
- poor muscle tone

## What are the goals for treating constipation?

- Empty the bowels. This helps get rid of the pain from constipation.
- Soften bowel movements. Softer stools are easier and less painful to pass.
- Prevent constipation from coming back. Help your child have healthy bowel habits with water, fibre, activity and a daily bowel routine.

**When treating constipation, it is very important that your child take all medications as directed by your doctor.**

### 1. Clean out phase:

The goal of this phase is to empty your child's bowels. Your child will need to stay near a toilet during the clean out phase when you and your child are at home.

1. Have your child drink lots of water during the clean out phase.
2. Give the medication chosen for your child.

#### Fleet enema

Instructions:       Adult                      or       Pediatric (for children)  
 Once a day                      or       Twice a day  
 For \_\_\_\_\_ day(s)

**❑ Pico Salax**

1. In the morning, have your child drink \_\_\_\_\_ packet, mixed in 150 ml (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) of cold water.
2. Six to 8 hours later, have your child drink \_\_\_\_\_ packet, mixed in 150 ml (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) of cold water.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for \_\_\_\_\_ day(s).

**❑ Peg 3350 (RestoraLAX<sup>®</sup>, Peg Flakes<sup>®</sup>, Relaxa<sup>®</sup>, Lax-a-day<sup>®</sup>)**

Give \_\_\_\_\_ grams twice a day for \_\_\_\_\_ day(s).

Measure out the dose using the special scoop that comes with the powder. 1 scoop = 17 grams (a heaping tablespoon).

Mix your child's dose in 120 to 240 ml ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup) of water or juice. To make it tasteless, stir until the powder dissolves completely. Have your child drink all the mixture.

## 2. Maintenance phase

The goal of this phase is to help your child have healthier bowel movements.

**1. Give the medication chosen for your child.**

**❑ Peg 3350 (RestoraLAX<sup>®</sup>, Peg Flakes<sup>®</sup>, Relaxa<sup>®</sup>, Lax-a-day<sup>®</sup>)**

Give \_\_\_\_\_ grams once a day for \_\_\_\_\_ day(s).

Measure out the dose using the special scoop that comes with the powder. 1 scoop = 17 grams (a heaping tablespoon).

Mix your child's dose in 120 to 240 ml ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 cup) of water or juice. To make it tasteless, stir until the powder dissolves completely. Have your child drink all the mixture.

**❑ Other:**

## How can I help my child have healthy bowel habits?

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Water</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The most important thing your child can do is drink lots of water. Water is the body's best friend!</li><li>• Try to have your child drink _____ cups of water a day.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Fibre</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give your child foods that are high in fibre (fruits, vegetables, whole-grain breads and cereals).</li></ul>   |
| <b>Activity</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage your child to play and be active. Moving around helps the bowels to work.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Bowel routine</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help your child get into a routine. At least once a day, have your child sit on the toilet for 10 to 15 minutes, preferable after a meal. Bring an activity.</li><li>• Help your child relax. Make sure your child's feet are flat on the floor or on a bench, not dangling from the toilet seat. Remove pants and underwear if needed.</li><li>• Teach your child to pay attention when he or she feels it is time to use the toilet. Your child should not ignore this feeling or try to hold in a bowel movement. Explain that regular bowel movements are normal and important for good health.</li><li>• If your child has been constipated for a long time, it may take several weeks or months to get into a healthy bowel routine.</li></ul> |