

Orthopedics and rehabilitation

What is constipation?

Sometimes, stools (poop) get hard and dry. This makes them hard to pass. Your child may be constipated if:

- they have to push really hard to get the poop out.
- the poop is very hard and comes out in hard balls.
- they do not have a bowel movement (BM) for more than 2 to 3 days.

What causes it?

Constipation can be caused by:

- Pain medicine with codeine or morphine in it.
- A change in activity levels. This may happen if your child is sick, has a broken bone, is injured or had surgery or has stayed in bed or a wheelchair for a long time.
- Drinking less fluid than normal.
- A change in the foods that your child eats.

How is it treated?

Have your child drink more fluid and get more fiber in the diet.

This is often not enough if your child is on bed rest or is taking pain medicines. Other medicine is often needed. The medicine might be taken by mouth, or it might go in the rectum (bottom). This is called a suppository.

In the hospital, your child will be given a medicine called Senokot® to start moving the bowels. Once your child goes home, these things should help:

- Give the Senokot until your child is off pain medicine. It comes as a flavored syrup or in a chocolate bar called Exlax®. Follow the directions on the medicine package for the right amount.
- Another medicine instead of the Senokot is Miralax. Miralax is mixed with juice or water and must be drunk quickly. It will not work if it is sipped over several hours. Follow the directions on the medicine package for the right amount.
- Any medicine by mouth will take 1 to 2 days to work. If you are concerned about your child being constipated, it is better to give a suppository. The suppository should work within a few minutes to hours.



Treatment continued

- If your child has not had a BM after 1 to 2 days, give a Dulcolax® suppository or a **liquid** glycerin suppository about 20 minutes after a meal. The suppository works faster and better after a meal. Giving it after dinner or breakfast works best. Follow the directions on the medicine package for the right amount.
- If your child has no BM after the first suppository, give another one the next day.
- If your child has no BM after the second suppository, give a Fleets Enema®. Follow the directions on the box. Use a pediatric Fleets Enema for 2 to 11 years old. Use an adult size Fleets Enema for ages 12 or older.
- All of the above medicines and treatments are sold over the counter at most drug stores.
- Call the doctor or nurse if your child still does not have a BM after trying all of the above.
- These medicines and treatments should be used for a short period of time. If your child is still constipated after 2 to 3 weeks, call your child's health care provider. You can review the medicines and treatments you've used so far.
- Be sure your child gets enough fluid and fiber in their diet.
- Other helpful teaching sheets:
 - Increasing Fiber in your Child's Diet (#1471)
 - Giving a Rectal Suppository (#1101)
 - Enema: Ready-to-Use (#1348)
 - Constipation (#1844)

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has not had a BM after giving the Fleet's Enema®.
- Starts to vomit.
- Has more stomach pain than normal.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.