

Constipation in Children

Information for patients, relatives and carers

February 2024

Constipation is when your child has two or more of the following:

- Two or less bowel movements a week
- History of excessive stool withholding
- History of painful or hard bowel movement
- History of large diameter bowel movement (toilet blocker)
- Presence of large faecal mass in the rectum
- At least one episode of faecal incontinence once child has achieved toilet training skills

Other symptoms of constipation can also include:

- Overflow soiling which can be very smelly, thick and sticky or dry and flaky Bowel movements without sensation.
- Passing rabbit droppings (Type 1 Bristol Stool Chart)
- Distress when passing a bowel movement
- Straining to pass a bowel movement
- Bleeding with hard bowel movement
- Poor appetite that improves with bowel movement
- Abdominal pain with passing a bowel movement
- Anal pain when passing a bowel movement
- Posturing such as straight legged, tiptoes, back arching when needing to pass stool

Treatment

Osmotic laxative - Movicol / Macrogol medication

The sachet of medication is mixed with water which moves through the child's gut without being absorbed into their body so stays in their bowel. This makes bowel movement softer and easier to pass. This medication can take three days to take effect. This medication is required to be reviewed every three months.

Stimulant medication - Sodium Picosulphate /Senna

This medication works by encouraging the muscles in your child's bowel to move waste products through their bowel. It can take 6-12 hours to take effect. This medication is required to be reviewed every three months.

Self Help

Increase fibre in your child's diet

- High fibre breakfast cereals, wholemeal bread, pasta and rice, wheat biscuits
- 2 portions of fruit a day
- 3 portions of vegetables a day
- Beans and pulses

Increase your child's fluid intake

Total fluid intake per day:

- 0-6 months 700ml,
- 7-12 months 800ml,
- 1-3 years old 1300ml,
- 4-8 years old 1400ml,
- 9-13 years old 2100ml,

- 14-18 years old 2500ml,

Drink 6-7 drinks daily of water, squash etc., evenly spaced throughout the waking day.

Total milk, yogurts and cheeses to exceed no more than 500ml a day.

If your child is not keen on drinking, remember that soups, jellies, custard and gravy can all add fluid to their body.

Increase your child's activity level (if able)

Daily physical activity that is tailored to your child's stage of development and individual ability.

Further Information

Seek further advice from your child's GP to discuss medication and treatment as they may need to take medication for 12 months or longer.

Your child's Health Visitor/School Nurse can give additional advice around diet, fluid intake and toileting routines.

Useful websites

www.bladderandboweluk.co.uk

www.eric.org.uk

www.thepoonurses.uk

<https://gikids.org/constipation>

Contacting the Team

Children's Bladder and Bowel Service
Bensham Hospital
Saltwell Road
Gateshead
NE8 4YL

Telephone: 0191 445 8417

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have.

If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on 0191 445 6129 (09.00 – 17.00, Monday to Friday).

You can also email PALS at ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Chief Executive,
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Trust Headquarters,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Sheriff Hill,
Gateshead,
NE9 6SX

The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website ([Privacy - QE Gateshead](#)) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

**This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats
upon request**