

# Is Your Child Constipated?



**More**  
fiber, liquids, and  
lots of activity  
can help!



# Constipation

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**Does your child have hard, dry stools (poops) that are difficult to pass? Your child may have constipation.**

## **Signs of constipation may include:**

- Stomach pain or pain while having a bowel movement
- Less than three bowel movements a week
- Dry, hard stools that are difficult to pass

## **Things to know:**

- Always check with your health care professional if the problem persists.
- Laxatives, suppositories, enemas, and mineral oil are not recommended. These can cause health problems for your child.
- If the stool is soft, your child is likely not constipated.

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair kissing a baby on the cheek. The baby is wearing a white floral patterned shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage.

## What can cause constipation?

- Not eating enough fiber-rich foods
- Not enough movement or activity
- Holding bowel movements
- Dehydration due to vomiting or fever
- Some medical conditions or medications

### **In babies:**

- Baby formula mixed wrong
- Solid foods started too early, before 6 months

### **In toddlers and young children:**

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Too many processed foods low in fiber



## Babies Under 6 Months

During the first month, babies may have a few stools (poopy diapers) a day. After one month, babies have fewer stools each day or even a stool every few days. Babies who drink formula tend to have firmer stools than babies who are breastfed; this is not constipation.

### **If you think your baby may have constipation:**

- Check with your health care professional to be sure your baby is getting enough breastmilk or formula. Be sure you are mixing the formula correctly.
- Put a warm washcloth on your baby's stomach.
- Do not change formulas unless your health care professional tells you to do so.
- Breastfeed more often.
- Give your baby tummy time. It helps your baby's head, neck and upper body muscles develop.

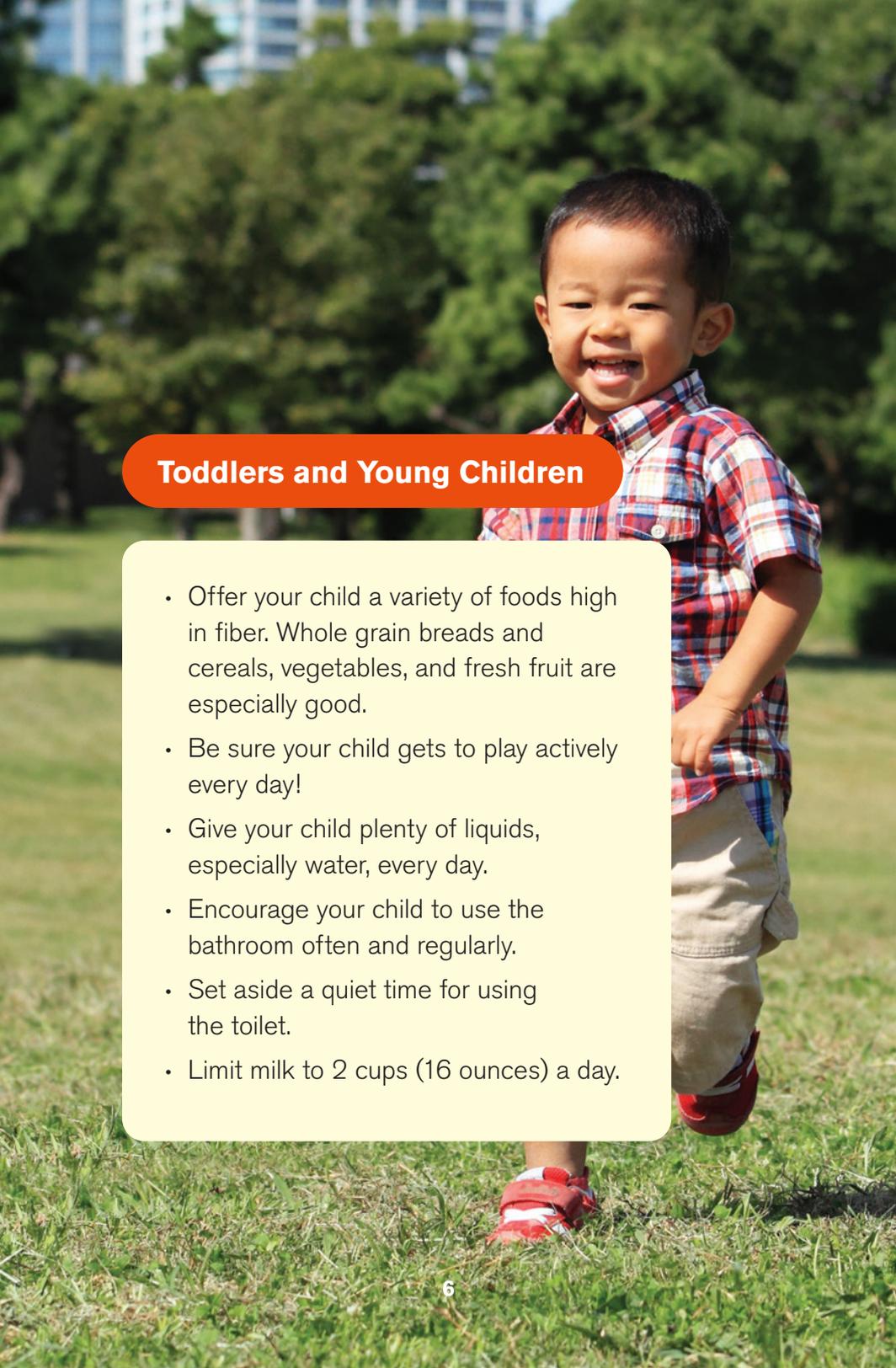
## Babies Over 6 Months

Help your baby be more active. Encourage baby to move or crawl on the floor.

### **If you think your older baby has constipation:**

- Give your baby more liquids. Twice a day, you can offer 4 ounces of plain water or 2 ounces of prune, pear or apple juice mixed with 2 ounces of water.
- Give your baby more foods with fiber, like soft fruits and soft cooked vegetables.
- Soften one teaspoon of 100% bran cereal with breastmilk or formula and add this to your baby's food.





## Toddlers and Young Children

- Offer your child a variety of foods high in fiber. Whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fresh fruit are especially good.
- Be sure your child gets to play actively every day!
- Give your child plenty of liquids, especially water, every day.
- Encourage your child to use the bathroom often and regularly.
- Set aside a quiet time for using the toilet.
- Limit milk to 2 cups (16 ounces) a day.



## Foods High in Fiber

Whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables and fruits are especially good sources of fiber. Here are a few examples:

### Whole Grain Products

- Whole grain breads
- Whole grain crackers
- Popcorn

### Hot & Cold Breakfast Cereals

- 100% bran cereal
- Shredded wheat cereal
- Oatmeal



### Cooked Grains

- Brown rice
- Barley



### Cooked Vegetables

- Carrots
- Peas
- Broccoli
- Cooked spinach or other greens
- Summer and winter squash
- Sweet potatoes





**Children under age 4 can choke more easily on foods such as popcorn, nuts, dried fruit, and raw vegetables. Cut foods into small pieces and stay close by.**



### **Fruits**

- Pears
- Dried fruits
- Apples
- Berries
- Bananas

### **Beans and Nut Products**

- Pinto, black, and kidney beans
- Dried peas (split peas)
- Lentils
- Peanut butter



## High Fiber Menu Suggestions for Toddlers and Children

Menus	Day 1	Day 2
<b>Breakfast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrambled egg</li> <li>• Bran muffin</li> <li>• Prune juice</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oatmeal with raisins</li> <li>• Berries</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>
<b>Snack</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pear with skin</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole grain toast strips with peanut butter</li> <li>• Orange juice</li> </ul>
<b>Lunch</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lentil soup</li> <li>• Tuna sandwich on whole wheat bread</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetable beef soup</li> <li>• Cheese quesadilla with corn tortilla</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>
<b>Snack</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole grain crackers with peanut butter</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>
<b>Dinner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tacos with beef and beans</li> <li>• Cooked carrots</li> <li>• Fresh fruit salad</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baked chicken</li> <li>• Peas</li> <li>• Brown rice</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>



**California Department of Public Health, California WIC Program**

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