

Constipation

Easy to treat

Constipation is a very common problem in children. Many children normally pass stools as far apart as every few days. Regardless, you should treat hard stools that are difficult to pass and those that happen only every three days as constipation.

From day four and for the first few weeks, your baby should pass at least two yellow stools every day. These stools should be at least the size of a £2 coin. Remember, it's normal for breastfed babies to pass loose stools. Switching the type of milk or formula can also cause constipation.

Many things contribute to constipation but infants and children who get wellbalanced meals typically are not constipated.

Ask your Health Visitor for advice. In rare cases, constipation can be due to an underlying illness, so if the problem doesn't go away in a few days, it's important to talk to your GP.

Health Visitor says

For babies over six months

To avoid constipation and help stop it coming back make sure your child has a balanced diet including plenty of fibre such as fruit, vegetables, baked beans and wholegrain breakfast cereals. We do not recommend unprocessed bran (an ingredient in some foods), which can cause bloating, flatulence (wind) and reduce the absorption of micronutrients. Drink plenty of fluids.

Bottle-fed baby

If a bottle-fed baby becomes constipated you can try offering cooled boiled water between feeds (never dilute baby milk). If the problem doesn't go away, talk to your Health Visitor or GP again.

1

Does my child have a balanced diet?

2

If your child is constipated, they may find it painful to go to the toilet.

3

Ask your Health Visitor or Pharmacist whether a suitable laxative may help.

Source: NICE guidelines 2009, constipation in children