

Nutrition Facts

Bowel Habits of Babies and Children

Some babies have bowel movements after every feeding; some children have them days apart. Both extremes are perfectly normal and may just be your child's pattern.

If your child has painful bowel movements that are hard, dry, pebble-like and difficult to pass, your infant or child may be **constipated**. Many children have some discomfort passing stools but produce a normal stool; therefore, they **do not have true constipation**.

Tips for healthy bowel movements

Ages 0-6 months

Infants may have harder stools or have bowel movements less often if they don't get enough fluids.

- Offer the breast more often.
- Check that baby is soaking at least 6 diapers per day.
- Juice is **not** recommended
- Water is typically **not** recommended in the first 6 months.
- Discuss with your doctor.



Ages 6-12 months

Babies at this age may be constipated if they don't get enough fluid or fibre or are holding in their stool.

- Offer more breast milk.
- Offer 1-2 oz. (30-60 ml) of water, 1-3 times per day.
- Offer dried peas and beans, and a wide variety of whole grains, vegetables and fruit. If offering dried fruit, like mashed prunes, offer with other foods and remember to clean your child's teeth and/or gums afterwards
- Offer brown rice, barley and oatmeal infant cereal.
- Juice is not recommended

Ages 1 + years

Not enough fluids, not enough fibre and inactivity contribute to constipation in kids. Some children "hold in" their stools because they are fearful of the toilet.

- Increase fluids:
 - Offer water most often.
 - Juice is not recommended
 - If not breastfeeding, offer 16-24 oz. (500-750 ml) fluid milk daily. Whole milk should be given until 24 months.
- Offer more high-fibre foods. (See below).
- Be active with your children. Go for a walk together.
- Be flexible and relaxed during toilet teaching – this may ease your child's fears
- Having a firm foot support while on the potty may make it more comfortable to pass a bowel movement.



Facts on Fibre

Fibre is the part of food that our body cannot digest. It passes through us and ends up in our stool. Fibre helps with constipation because it makes it easier to have a bowel movement.

Foods that are good sources of fibre are: cooked or raw fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, and legumes such as beans and lentils. Fibre can only be found in foods that come from plants. Meat, chicken, eggs, fish, milk & milk products do not contain fibre. Vegetables and fruits contain more fibre than juice, so whole vegetables and fruit with unsweetened milk and water to drink should be offered instead.

When increasing fibre, be sure to add water too. Water helps fibre do its job! Increase fibre slowly to avoid causing gas, cramps & bloating.

How much fibre is needed daily?

	Age (years)	Grams
Babies	< 12 months	Not determined
Children	1 to 3	19
Children	4 to 8	25
Boys	9 to 13	31
Girls	9 to 13	26
Boys	14 to 18	38
Girls	14 to 18	26

Based on Dietary Reference Intakes 2010.



Consult your health care provider when:

- Your infant is under six months of age and has hard painful bowel movements.
- You have tried the suggestions listed here and your child is still constipated.
- You find blood in the stool.

Do not give your child laxatives, enemas, suppositories or any medications without talking to your doctor first.

Reference:

Unlockfood.ca. 2018. Focus on Fibre. <http://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Fibre/Focus-on-Fibre.aspx>

Increase Fibre-Containing Foods:

	grams fibre
Shreddies® (1/2 cup)	3.1 g
Corn Bran® (1/2 cup)	2.4 g
Whole grain bread (1 slice)	2-3 g
Whole grain pasta (1/2 cup cooked)	3 g
Whole grain brown rice (1/2 cup cooked)	2 g
Apple sauce (1/2 cup)	1 g
Banana (1/2)	1 g
Blueberries, strawberries (1/2 cup)	2 g
Orange (1/2)	1.5 g
Canned Pear (1/2 cup)	2.6 g
Pureed prunes (1/2 cup)	4 g
Broccoli and carrots (1/2 cup)	2 g
Peas (1/2 cup)	4 g
Mashed sweet potato (1/2 cup)	5 g
Bean salad (1/2 cup)	7 g
Lentil soup (1/2 cup)	3 g
Sunflower seeds (1/4 cup shelled)	2 g

Fibre amounts listed are approximate.

Check Nutrition Facts on food packages

- Choose cereals with 4 g of fibre per serving, and bread products with 2-4 g of fibre per serving