



Constipation in Children

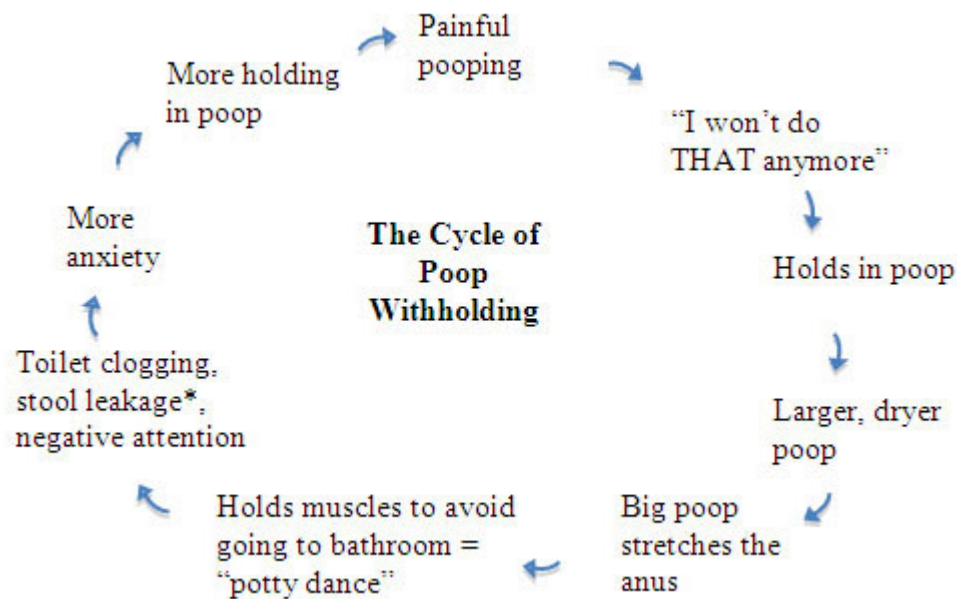
What is constipation?

Children with constipation have stool (poop) that is dry, hard, and difficult or painful to get out. Painful pooping makes it more likely that your child will want to hold the poop in and not use the bathroom.

Events that can lead to painful pooping include:

- Toilet training
- Changes in diet or daily routine
- Illness
- A stressful home or school event
- Not having a toilet available when needed
- Putting off pooping because a child is “too busy”

Don't make your child feel bad or punish her because of a constipation problem; this will only make things worse.



*If your child holds in her poop, it may cause a blockage. Small amounts of liquid poop might leak out around the sides of the blockage even when your child is not trying to go. This is called fecal incontinence, or soiling. Remember, your child is not soiling herself on purpose.

Treatment

1. Remove Poop that is Stuck / “Clear the traffic jam”

- May not be necessary depending on your child’s history and exam. If necessary, your doctor will go over a specific medication plan for your child.
- If poop removal with a medicine is needed, it is best to give on the weekend when you have no big plans (when the pooping starts, it is often uncomfortable).

2. Keep your Child Pooping / “Keep the traffic flowing!”

- Most younger children with constipation will need a medicine to help keep them pooping until they finish toilet-training. Older children often need a daily medicine until they develop a normal pooping routine.
- Staying physically active, drinking lots of water, and eating high-fiber foods (raisins, prunes, apricots, broccoli, beans, whole-grain cereals) may help as well.
- The goal is 1-2 poops a day the consistency of soft-serve ice cream or mashed potatoes.

3. Give lots of Chances for the Poop to Come Out / “Ensure lots of exit ramps!”

For Younger Children

- Get the child on the toilet!
- Schedule toilet time 3 times per day -- best in the morning and after meals
 - Set the timer for 3-5 minutes each time
 - No dangling feet (use a step-stool/phone books/box to prop up feet)
 - Knees should be bent at 90 degrees
 - Try blowing up balloons on the toilet (good distracter when pushing hurts)
 - Make the bathroom a happy place (books, games, stories, conversation)
- Give your child lots of praise for just *sitting* on the toilet.
- Reward toilet time (use sticker charts, etc) and DO NOT focus on whether your child poops or not – it is the act of sitting on the toilet that is important. The poop will eventually come out.

For School-Aged Children

- Tell your child to listen to her body and don’t ignore the urge to poop.
- Schedule 5 minutes twice a day for your child to spend relaxing on the toilet. Without scheduling this time, your child may not take a break to poop.
- Admit that a lot of kids don’t like to poop at school. Toilet time should be scheduled before and after school.
- Use the nurse’s office as a private toilet when needed.
- Discuss ways to get over public toilet fears.

Overall, 60-90% of children with constipation are “better” after one year of treatment but it is common to have some struggles again from time to time.

Notes on Your Child’s Treatment Plan:

This document is intended to provide health related information so that you may be better informed. It is not

a substitute for a doctor's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.

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