

## Constipation: Infant

Constipation (con-sta-PA-shun) in infants less than one year of age is common, but it can be a source of concern for parents. Sometimes your baby is not really constipated, but must be given time to set his own schedule for having a bowel movement. Normally, an infant's stool is soft and easily passed. Even if an infant is not constipated, his bowel movements may be irregular.

In rare cases, constipation may be caused by a lack of nerves or by structural problems in the lower large intestine. Your baby can be tested for these conditions if your doctor feels it is necessary.

### SIGNS OF CONSTIPATION

- An infant who is constipated usually strains more than other babies to have a bowel movement.
- The stool may be formed and hard like small pebbles, or it may be soft and mushy. Stool may even be wide and large.
- Sometimes solid stool stays inside and liquid stool (like diarrhea) may pass out around it.
- Other signs of constipation are infrequent stools that are difficult to pass.
- Your child's abdomen (belly) can become swollen with gas, and painful cramps can result from constipation.

### TREATMENT

- If your baby is old enough to eat strained foods, you may give him fruits and vegetables.
- If your baby is not eating jar baby food yet, you may give 2 to 4 ounces of fruit juices (prune, pear, cherry, or apple) per day. If his stools become too loose, give less juice to your baby.
- If your baby is eating rice cereal, it may help to switch to oatmeal or barley cereal. Rice cereal can cause constipation in some children.
- Don't give your baby enemas, laxatives, or suppositories unless you are told to do so by your doctor.

## Medical Therapy

Your doctor has ordered the following treatments:

- Give your child the following medicine:  
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- Check your child's temperature by rectum using a lubricated rectal thermometer. This may stimulate the baby to pass stool.



**Picture 1** Comfort your baby.

## WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if any of the following occurs:

- If your baby is irritable and seems to be having abdominal pain.
- If you see blood in your baby's stool.
- If your baby's constipation does not improve with current treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call your baby's doctor at:

(phone) \_\_\_\_\_.