

# Constipation and Bladder Health



Constipation in children may contribute to problems of the urinary tract (kidneys and bladder). Constipation is a condition where stools are hard and difficult to pass. Parents are often not aware that their child is constipated. Signs may include infrequent bowel movements (every 2 to 3 days), hard stools (small balls of stool) or streaks on the underwear.

Sometimes there is so much stool in the colon that only soft or liquid stool can pass through. As a result, some children who are constipated may have loose stools.

Constipation places pressure on the urinary tract and increases the risk of urinary tract infections,

The goal for your child is to have one soft stool a day. We encourage the following treatment plan to help your child to have a normal stool each day:

1. **Increase fiber in the diet.** Encourage your child to select foods from the attached list and add to meals/snacks.
2. **Increase fluid intake.** Your child should drink \_\_\_\_\_ liters fluid every day (water is great). Limit caffeine and carbonated drinks. You will know when your child is drinking enough by the color of his/her urine. Urine should be clear or light yellow, as shown in the chart below.

Body has plenty of fluids.	Clear	
Body has adequate fluids.	Light yellow	
Body is low on water.	Dark yellow	

3. **Increase activity.** Encourage your child to exercise 30-60 minutes a day, for 5-6 days a week.
4. **Practice good bowel habits.**
  - Have your child sit on the toilet twice a day 20-30 minutes after a meal, for about 10 minutes.
  - Use a foot stool for support. This will help the muscles relax, so it is easier to pass a stool.
  - Have your child blow, whistle or sing a song while on the toilet.. This will also help the muscles relax.
  - Make sitting on the toilet a fun activity. Reward your child when he/she passes a stool.

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5. **Use Miralax for soft stools.**

- Miralax is a mild laxative. It draws water into the colon, so stools are softer and easier to pass.
- Miralax comes as a powder and can be purchased over the counter (most insurance companies will not pay for it). Give dose as directed by your provider.
- It's best to mix Miralax into water, lemonade or juice.
- It may take 2-4 days for Miralax to begin working. You may need to adjust your child's dose up or down, so that he/she has one soft stool per day.
- Most common side effects are nausea, bloating, cramping or gas.
- One of the biggest mistakes parents make is stopping this medicine once their child begins having stools. If stopped too early, your child is likely to become constipated again.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Mary Bridge Nephrology Clinic at 253.403.3131.