



How Can I Tell If My Baby is Constipated?

New parents often worry that their babies are not pooping (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Pooping-By-the-Numbers.aspx>) enough. A baby eating formula usually has a bowel movement at least once most days, but may go 1 to 2 days between bowel movements. For breastfed infants (</English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/How-to-Tell-if-Baby-is-Getting-Enough-Milk.aspx>) it depends on age. During the first month of life, stooling less than once a day might mean your newborn isn't eating enough. However, breastfed infants may go several days or even a week between bowel movements, using every drop they eat to make more baby, not poop.



Infants normally work really hard to have a bowel movement, so straining at the stool isn't necessarily alarming, even when the infant cries or gets red in the face. For an infant to have a bowel movement can be a major effort, and it shows. Just imagine trying to poop lying on your back and you'll get the picture.

If you're concerned your baby may be constipated, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my baby excessively fussy?
- Is my baby spitting up (</English/tips-tools/Symptom-Checker/Pages/Spitting-Up-Reflux.aspx>) more than usual?
- Is my baby having dramatically more or fewer bowel movements than before?
- Are my baby's stools unusually hard, or do they contain blood related to hard stools?
- Does my baby strain for more than 10 minutes without success?

These signs can all suggest actual constipation.

Is there anything I can give my baby for constipation?

Once your baby is at least a month old, if you think they are constipated, you can try giving them a little apple or pear juice. The sugars in these fruit juices aren't digested very well, so they draw fluid into the intestines and help loosen stool. Although fruit juice is not recommended (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Fruit-Juice-and-Your-Childs-Diet.aspx>) for babies under a year of age, as a rule of thumb, you can give 1 ounce a day for every month of life up to about 4 months (a 3-month-old baby would get 3 ounces). Once your infant is taking solid foods (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx>) you can try vegetables and fruits, especially that old standby, prunes. If these dietary changes don't help, it's time to call your child's pediatrician.

More information

- Baby's First Days: Bowel Movements & Urination (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Babys-First-Days-Bowel-Movements-and-Urination.aspx>)
- Common Conditions in Newborns (</English/ages-stages/baby/Pages/Common-Conditions-in-Newborns.aspx>)
- Choosing a Formula (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Choosing-a-Formula.aspx>)
- Constipation in Children (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/constipation.aspx>)

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