

Definition & Facts for Constipation in Children

What is constipation in children?

Constipation in children is a condition in which your child may have

- fewer than two [bowel movements](#) a week
- [stools](#) that are hard, dry, or lumpy
- stools that are difficult or painful to pass

Your child also may tell you that he or she feels that not all stool has passed.

Some children have more bowel movements than others, so what's normal for one child may be different from another child. Also, as children get older, their bowel movement patterns may change. Even an infant's bowel movements change a lot in the first few weeks and months of life. [Learn when to see a doctor for your child's constipation.](#)

Constipation is not a disease but may be a symptom of another medical problem. In most cases, constipation in children lasts a short time and is not dangerous.

How common is constipation in children?

Constipation is common in children of all ages. Almost 1 of every 20 visits children make to a doctor are because of constipation.¹



Constipation is common in children of any age.

What are the complications of constipation in children?

Children who have constipation that lasts for a short time usually don't have complications. However, avoiding or delaying a bowel movement may lead to

- long-lasting constipation
- painful bowel movements

- [bladder control problems](#)
- [fecal impaction](#)


Complications of long-lasting constipation, especially in older children, may include

- [hemorrhoids](#)
- [anal fissures](#)
- [rectal prolapse](#)

References

[1] Blackmer AB, Farrington EA. Constipation in the pediatric patient: an overview and pharmacologic considerations. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*. 2010;24(6):385–399.

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 healthinfo@niddk.nih.gov

 1-800-860-8747

 @NIDDKgov