

# RENEE DAVIS

DIGEST HEALTH ADVOCATE



Dear Parent or Caregiver,

I'm so glad you're here! If your child has been struggling with constipation, you're not alone. It's something I see (and hear about) all the time from parents, and it can be frustrating — for you and for your little one.

This guide is designed to give you easy, natural, and science-backed tips you can start trying right away to make bathroom time easier and more comfortable. My goal is to empower you with practical tools, simple routines, and encouragement so you can help your child feel their best — one happy poop at a time.

Wishing your family comfort and happy tummies,

*Renee Davis*

Renee Davis, Digestive Health Advocate

Disclaimer: This guide is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease, and it does not replace personalized medical advice from your healthcare provider. Always consult a qualified medical professional before starting any new diet, supplement, or lifestyle change, especially if you have an existing medical condition or take prescription medication. The author and publisher are not responsible for any adverse effects or consequences that may arise from the use of the information provided in this guide.

# LITTLE BELLIES, BIG RELIEF: CONSTIPATION HELP FOR CHILDREN



Simple, natural steps to get things moving again...

If you've landed here, chances are you (or someone you love) is feeling... well... a little backed up.

First, take a deep breath, constipation is incredibly common, and it doesn't mean there's something "wrong" with your child. It's just their body asking for a little extra love and attention. This guide is here to give you simple, natural, and gentle tips you can start using today. No complicated medical jargon — just easy, science-backed steps to help their digestion flow more smoothly.



This gentle relief guide includes:

- Why constipation happens
- Signs and symptoms of constipation
- Hydration matters
- Kid-friendly high-fiber foods
- Gentle movements and play ideas
- Gentle abdominal massages
- Proper toilet positioning for kids
- Track their progress
- When to see a doctor

# WHY CONSTIPATION HAPPENS



## 1. Not enough fiber

- Many kids love white bread, pasta, and snack foods, but don't eat enough fruits, veggies, or whole grains. Without fiber, stools get small, hard, and difficult to pass.

## 2. Too little water

- Kids are often so busy playing that they forget to drink. Dehydration makes stools dry and harder to move.

## 3. Holding it in

- Some children avoid using the bathroom at school, on trips, or even at home because they're too busy playing, feel embarrassed, or had a painful poop in the past.

## 4. Changes in routine

- Starting school, travel, or new activities can disrupt bathroom habits.

## 5. Low activity levels

- Physical movement helps stimulate the intestines. Less running, climbing, and active play = slower digestion.

## 6. Diet high in constipating foods

- Lots of cheese, milk, fried snacks, and processed foods can slow things down.

## 7. Emotional stress

- Stress, anxiety, or big life changes (like moving or a new sibling) can affect bathroom habits too.

 **Parent Tip:** Often, constipation in kids is *not* due to a single cause, but a mix of diet, habits, and behavior. That's why small, steady lifestyle changes can make a big difference.

# WHY CONSTIPATION HAPPENS



There are medical conditions that result in difficult to treat chronic constipation:

- Celiac Disease: Can present in many different ways and 1 way is chronic, difficult to treat constipation.
- Hypothyroidism: This condition slows things down in the body = constipation
- Hypercalcemia: High levels of calcium in the blood which can slow down gut motility.
- Neurogenic bowel: Spinal cord conditions that affect the nerves that control the bladder/bowel. Patients that can walk, run, jump, climb or control their urine, unlikely have neurogenic bowel.

If you suspect your child may have a medical condition contributing to constipation, please consult with their pediatrician.

# SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONSTIPATION



Every child is different, but here are some common signs that your little one's tummy might need a little extra help:

- **Infrequent pooping** – going fewer than 3 times a week
- **Hard, dry stools** – like small pebbles or logs that are difficult to pass
- **Straining or pain** – your child may grimace, cry, or say it hurts when they go
- **Avoiding the bathroom** – sometimes kids “hold it in” because they’re busy playing or afraid it will hurt
- **Tummy aches or bloating** – their belly may feel full, tight, or uncomfortable
- **Small streaks of blood on the stool or toilet paper** – often from a tiny tear due to passing hard stool
- **Appetite changes** – not wanting to eat because they feel full or uncomfortable
- **Mood changes** – crankiness, irritability, or seeming “off”



Tricky thing with constipation, someone can poop every day and still have a larger stool burden present. Anytime you eat, you make new poop!

Constipation is common in kids and with a few simple changes, they usually bounce back quickly.

💡 **Parent Tip:** If your child hasn't had a bowel movement in several days *and* seems uncomfortable, it's a good idea to check in with your pediatrician.

# HYDRATION MATTERS



Water is one of the simplest and most powerful tools for keeping your child's digestion healthy. When kids don't drink enough, stools get dry and harder to pass. Here are some fun, kid-approved ways to help them sip more during the day:

## ☀️ Make Water Fun

- Let your child pick a special water bottle with their favorite color or character.
- Use silly straws or cups to make drinking water more exciting.
- Add fruit slices (strawberries, lemon, cucumber, or oranges) for natural flavor and a splash of color.

## ☀️ Build Water Breaks into the Day

- Offer water first thing in the morning.
- Encourage a sip every time they come in from playing outside.
- Make "water breaks" part of transitions – before school, after homework, or before bed.

## ☀️ Use Gentle Reminders

- Set small timers or fun alarms to signal "water time."
- Pair water with regular routines, like brushing teeth or snack time.

## ☀️ Offer Water-Rich Foods

- Watermelon, oranges, grapes, cucumbers, and celery add extra hydration.
- Serve them as snacks or pack in school lunches.



💡 **Parent Tip:** Kids don't always recognize thirst the way adults do. Encourage steady sipping throughout the day, rather than relying on them to ask for water.

# KID-FRIENDLY HIGH-FIBER FOODS



Adding more fiber to your child's diet is one of the easiest ways to help prevent and treat constipation. Fiber adds bulk, keeps stool soft, and helps things move along.

## Fruits

- Apples (with skin)
- Pears (with skin)
- Berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries)
- Prunes and raisins
- Bananas (ripe, not green)

## Vegetables

- Carrots
- Broccoli
- Sweet potatoes (with skin)
- Peas
- Corn

## Whole Grains

- Oatmeal or overnight oats
- Whole wheat bread and tortillas
- Brown rice or quinoa
- High-fiber cereals (look for 3g+ fiber per serving)
- Popcorn (air-popped, age-appropriate for choking safety)

## Nuts, Seeds & Legumes

- Peanut butter or almond butter (on whole grain toast or apple slices)
- Chia seeds or ground flaxseed (in smoothies or yogurt)
- Beans (black beans, lentils, chickpeas)
- Hummus with veggie sticks

### **Parent Tips**

- Introduce fiber gradually to avoid gas or bloating.
- Pair fiber-rich foods with plenty of water to make them most effective.
- Get kids involved – let them pick fruits or veggies at the store, or help prepare a “rainbow plate.”

# GENTLE MOVEMENT AND PLAY IDEAS



Movement isn't just good for strong muscles – it helps the intestines move too! Regular physical activity stimulates the digestive system, making it easier for kids to poop without discomfort.

## ☀ Everyday Active Play

- Running, jumping, or playing tag in the backyard
- Riding bikes or scooters
- Dancing to favorite songs (even a 5-minute dance party counts!)
- Playground time – climbing, swinging, and sliding all get the body moving

## ☀ Gentle Indoor Activities

- Simple yoga poses for kids (cat-cow, happy baby, child's pose)
- Animal walks: crawl like a bear, hop like a frog, or waddle like a duck
- Balloon toss or indoor ball games
- Stretching before bed to relax the body and tummy

## ☀ Family Movement Ideas

- Go for a family walk after dinner
- Weekend hikes or nature walks
- Family dance-offs or obstacle courses inside the house
- Gardening or raking leaves together



💡 **Parent Tip:** Kids don't need "exercise routines" to benefit – all they need is **active play every day**. Even 20–30 minutes of movement can give the digestive system a natural boost.

# GENTLE ABDOMINAL MASSAGES



## How Abdominal Massage Helps

1. Increases intestinal motility: Gentle pressure and movement along the colon's path can stimulate the smooth muscles in your gut, encouraging peristalsis (the wave-like movements that move stool forward).
2. Relieves gas and bloating: Massage can help trapped gas move through the intestines, reducing discomfort and making it easier to have a bowel movement.
3. Improves blood circulation: Light pressure increases blood flow to the digestive organs, supporting healthy function.
4. Relaxes the abdominal muscles: Tension in the abdomen can slow digestion; massage helps the area loosen up.

## How to Do It (Colon Massage Technique)

1. Lie on your back with knees bent.
2. Place your hands on your lower right abdomen (just above your hip bone).
3. Use gentle, circular motions and move **up** toward your ribs.
4. Move **across** the upper abdomen, just under the ribcage.
5. Move **down** the left side toward your hip bone.
6. Repeat for 5-10 minutes, once or twice daily.

*(This follows the direction of your large intestine: up the right side, across the top, down the left side.)*

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# PROPER TOILETING POSITION FOR KIDS



How your child sits on the toilet can make a big difference in how easy (or hard) it is for them to poop. The right position helps relax muscles and makes stooling less painful.

## ☀️ The Best Position

- Feet supported: Place a small stool or step under their feet so their knees are higher than their hips.
- Lean forward: Encourage them to rest their elbows on their knees.
- Relax the belly: Remind them to take slow, deep breaths.

## ☀️ Why It Works

When knees are higher than hips, it straightens the rectum and relaxes the pelvic floor. This makes it easier for stool to pass without straining.

## ☀️ Parent Tips

- A simple footstool or squatty potty works great — no fancy equipment needed.
- Make bathroom time relaxed and stress-free. Rushing or pressure can make kids more likely to “hold it in.”
- Encourage a routine: sitting on the toilet for 5 minutes after meals can help train the body to go.



💡 Fun Idea: Let your child decorate their “poop stool” with stickers — it makes them more likely to use it!



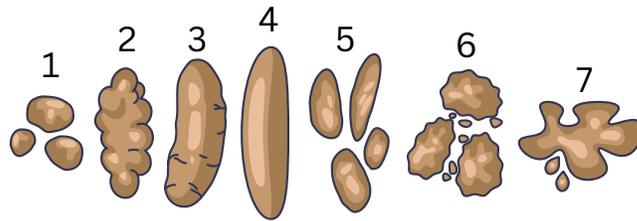
# TRACK THEIR PROGRESS



You may think you know how often your child is pooping but lets be honest.. life gets busy. Keep track of their stools! Also a great tool to bring to their pediatrician if you have concerns.

Bristol Stools: A range of stools from 1-7 to help describe consistency of the stool.

**Goal is type 4!**



Stools 1 to 3 - more constipation like

Stools 5 to 6 - more loose - could benefit from more fiber/bulking agent

Stool 6 - can be seen during times of infection/illness (fluffy stools)

Stool 7 - diarrhea/watery stools - can see type 7 if you have a larger stool burden and the only stool that can get out around that hard stool is liquid.

- **Constipation with overflow diarrhea:** This can be very confusing. An abdominal x-ray would be useful in this situation to assess for any larger stool burden. If you do have a large stool burden, a “cleanout” would be recommended with a daily bowel regimen to prevent stool accumulation. If the abdominal x-ray is negative for a larger stool burden then you should work with your pediatrician closer to investigate the diarrhea.

Other things to track:

1. Any blood? In the toilet water, mixed with the poop, only on the toilet paper?
  - a. Bright red or dark maroon (sometimes looks black)
    - i. Sometimes old poop can look black because it has been sitting for a while in the colon
2. How long did it take to pass the stool? Did you sit for 5 min or 1 hour?
3. Was the stool soft but hard to push out?

# WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Most constipation in children can be managed at home with simple changes to diet, hydration, and daily habits. But sometimes, it's important to get extra help. Call your pediatrician if you notice any of the following:

## ▶ Red Flags to Watch For

- **Constipation lasting more than 2 weeks** despite home changes
- **Severe pain** with bowel movements or frequent stomach aches
- **Blood in the stool** (beyond just a tiny streak from a small tear)
- **Refusal to eat or sudden loss of appetite**
- **Weight loss or poor weight gain**
- **Vomiting** along with constipation
- **Fever** with abdominal symptoms
- **Persistent soiling or accidents** in underwear (may mean stool backup)



## 💡 Parent Tip

Trust your instincts. If your child seems unusually uncomfortable or “not themselves,” it’s always better to check in with your healthcare provider. You know your child best!

## 💡 Medications

There are different forms of medications to help treat constipation. Your pediatrician can help develop a bowel regimen if that is an appropriate next step. Children with moderate to severe constipation typically require the aid of medications to help soften and move stool thru the colon.