



# NUTRITION TIPS

## Constipation in Children

Constipation is a common intestinal problem in children and adults. It occurs when there is a painful passage of solid waste or a reduction in bowel movement. In healthy children the frequency of stooling changes with age and diet. While newborns may stool several times a day, infants that are exclusively breastfed may not stool for weeks and still remain healthy. By the age of four however, a child may be stooling just once in a day.

The frequency of bowel movements varies from child to child. However, as long as your child's stool is soft, he or she is not constipated.

## Causes and Symptoms of Constipation

Constipation in children generally results from a change in diet and fluid intake, inadequate consumption of dietary fibre, over-consumption of sugary and fatty foods, stress and the postponement of the urge to

go to the toilet. Infants having painful bowel movements may be seen extending their legs and squeezing their buttock muscles while stooling. The common symptoms however include abdominal pains, decreased appetite, vomiting, nausea, frequent urination and bedwetting.

## Treating Constipation in Children

To treat constipation in your child try modifying his diet by decreasing foods that constipate like bananas and cheese while increasing his intake of high fibre foods like fruits and vegetables. Also, make him drink a minimum of three to four glasses of water or fruit juice each day. The ultimate goal of the treatment is to have your child start producing soft and smooth stools again. So, you should keep up the treatment until this change is visible.

## Preventing Constipation

To prevent constipation you need to pay close attention to what your child eats and

drinks and also see to it that he or she gets to do enough exercise daily. You should also help your child establish regular times of going to visit the toilet. Try getting him or her up early in the morning so as to have enough time to use the bathroom before going to school. Also, make your child eat more fibre and limit the amount of ice cream and snacks consumed. Ensure that your child gets an adequate fluid intake so that his stool can be soft and easy to pass out. You should however talk to a paediatrician if the constipation becomes so recurrent that it begins to interfere with with daily activities.



### \* For more information on child nutrition

Visit the Olu Akinkugbe Foundation  
Child Nutrition Centre  
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**Friesland Foods WAMCO Nigeria PLC,**  
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