

# Children's Constipation

for their healthy growth

## What is constipation? .....

Constipation is a condition of having difficulty or fewer defecation frequencies. If your child has bowel movements for less than 3 times per week or suffers pain or bleeding when passing stools, s/he can be considered as having constipation. If a small amount of stools leaks out from the sides of already accumulated stools, you can also consider this as a constipation symptom. If the constipation symptoms persist, medical treatment will be need.

## What causes constipation? .....

Most of the constipation cases are due to unknown, constitutional factors of which condition is called the “functional constipation”. However, constipation can also derive from bowel, anal, hormonal and/or neural diseases. It is necessary to find out what diseases cause constipation, if constipation occurs soon after birth, the symptoms associate with severe stomach ache, vomiting or limited weight gain, or if you find that usual constipation treatments do not improve the condition.

**Do not leave the constipation untreated!**

When stools stay inside the bowel, the stools will lose its liquid content and gradually get hardened. The hardened stools cause severe anal pain during evacuation, so children try to avoid going to toilet or withhold the stools. This will keep the stools inside the bowel even longer and thus leads to vicious cycle. If the stools continue to stay inside the bowel longer, it will make treatment much more difficult.

**So if your child is diagnosed with constipation he or she should get treatment immediately**

Keeping your child having a good bowel movement will help the recovery from constipation in many cases.

**The three main constipation treatments are well-regulated daily life and bowel habit, healthy diet and laxatives.**

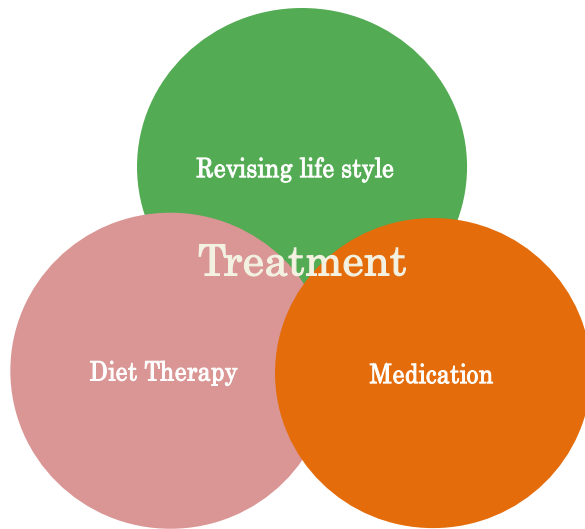
## Let's revise your child's daily life

If stools were kept inside the bowel, your child will start losing the sensations of bowel movement (willingness to defecate). Hence, it is important to keep the rectum (a part of bowel closest to the anus) empty.

1. Allow your child to go to toilet when s/he feels the bowel movement.
2. Take time for your child to sit on the toilet to make it as part of his/her daily routines.
3. Toilet training can be one of the factors causing constipation. Make sure not to pressure your child to start toilet training until s/he recovers from constipation.

Having a well-regulated daily life is also important. Early bed time and wake-up time gives your child to have plenty of time to eat breakfast.

Large intestine's function will be most active after having breakfast.



## It is important to keep an eye on your child's diet

When bowel contains stools in lower volume, the stools tend to stay in longer and get hardened.

Taking fiber-rich foods such as vegetables, fruits, seaweeds, beans and potatoes help prevent stools from getting hardened. If your child consumes sweet drinks or snacks, s/he may take calories with lack of fibers.

**Let's manage your child's healthy diet that helps in producing stools.**

Revision of daily life and diet therapies are recommended to all patients with constipation. However, there are several cases where remedial behavior does not show much improvement of the symptoms or taking extended periods of time. This is the time when your child needs to take laxatives.

**In constipation treatment, it is important to keep the rectum empty and also to keep the stools soft enough**

## Let's keep the correct laxative dosages

Laxatives keep the stools soft and activate bowel movement. To prevent stools from accumulating, taking laxatives daily is more effective rather than taking them after stools accumulate inside the bowel.

If your child has defecation less than three times a week or your child suffers from pain or bleeding when stools are passing, even if your child is under treatment, s/he is probably taking an insufficient amount of laxatives. By contrast, if stools have been too soft for a long time, your child may be taking an excessive amount of laxatives. In those cases, please remember not to alter the dosage without any medical advice. It is important to keep a daily record of your child's bowel movement and consult your doctor.

### Enemas and laxatives are not addictive

If laxatives are taken insufficiently and the constipation symptoms persist, the condition will gradually become severer and the laxatives start showing lower effectiveness. Some patients misunderstand that enemas and laxatives are addictive drugs, but the truth is, if your child is under appropriate treatment s/he will then no longer need enemas and be able to reduce the amount of laxatives.

## Let's make sure to keep on medications

Treatment for constipation takes a long time until it comes into effect. Your child will need to continue on having well-regulated daily life and balanced diet. Fundamentally, your child will also need to take laxatives for long periods of time. In many cases, where s/he stops taking laxatives or reduces the amount of dosages at a too early stage, the constipation symptoms will soon reoccur.

**Remember to record your child's daily bowel movement and ask your doctor about when to reduce or stop taking laxatives**

## How do I know if stools are accumulated?

Your child's stools may be accumulated inside the bowel when you find no defecation while s/he tries to release or when his/her stools are sticky or in small pellets. If your child does not defecate for 5 days or over, it is advised that s/he should be taken to the doctor for evacuating the stools.

## What if the treatment is not effective?

If the treatment is on the right track, your child will "no longer have constipation" within 1 to 2 months. If your child is having difficulty in getting on track, there may be specific causes. In such case, you can consult your doctor and ask if it is better to seek specialists (for a second opinion).

\* Please also visit the website for more details.

<http://www.jspghan.org/constipation/>

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