

## Nutrition for a healthy bowel

By OSCAR Hospitality Dietitian, Caitlin Dillon-Smith

Constipation is a very common condition, affecting people of all ages. Almost everyone gets constipated at some time in their life. Babies can get constipated when solid foods are introduced, and children might become constipated if they hold back bowel movements (particularly during toilet training).

Constipation is the passing of hard, dry bowel motions (stools) that may be infrequent or difficult to pass.

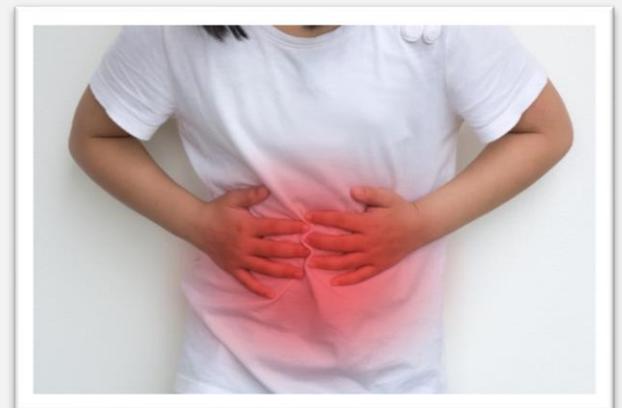
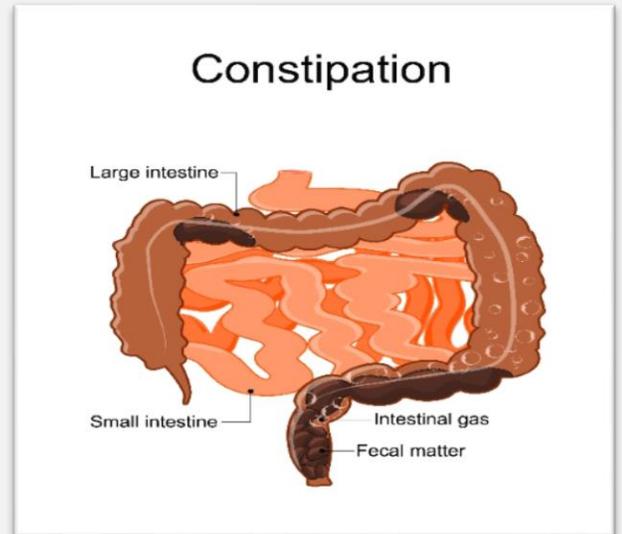
### Signs of constipation in children

- Saying that it hurts when doing a poo
- Showing signs of 'holding on' – such as crossing legs, running around, refusing to sit on the toilet
- Complaining of tummy pain
- Soiling their pants (with ongoing constipation)

### Causes of constipation in children

The cause of a child's constipation may not always be clear, but may include:

- A tendency to 'put off' going to the toilet – ignoring the urge to defecate because they are too busy playing (water will be extracted from the stools, making them difficult to pass)
- Lack of toileting routine when being toilet trained



- Refusing to use childcare toilets for various reasons, such as lack of privacy or a smelly toilet
- Physical inactivity – lack of regular physical activity/exercise
- Low-fibre diet – fibre adds bulk to the faeces, making it more easily pushed along the digestive tract.
- Insufficient water – the fibre in faeces will only plump up with water, so sufficient fluid intake is essential.



### Tips to promote a healthy bowel

Lifestyle related prevention/treatments for constipation (outside of medications/laxatives) include:

- Toilet Routine– Toilet training requires motivation and encouragement. Ensure a regular toilet routine. Ensure child has sufficient time to go to the toilet and don't rush them.
- Increase fibre intake – Good sources of fibre include wholegrain cereals, fruits, vegetables and legumes.
- Increase fluids – fluids help to bulk faeces. Make water the drink of choice instead of cordial, fruit drinks and soft drinks
- Physical Activity – regular physical activity/exercise helps in improving bowel motility. Limit sedentary activities: set time limits for TV watching, computer use and handheld computer games



### How much fibre is in foods?

Food	Portion	Fibre (grams)	Food	Portion	Fibre (grams)
<b>Cereals</b>			<b>Vegetables</b>		
Rolled oats	½ cup	4.5	Broccoli	100g	4.0
Cornflakes	30g	1.1	Corn	1 cob	5.9
Weet-bix	30g	3.3	Carrots	100g	3.0
Coco-pops	30g	0.4	Potato, skin on	100g	1.7
Psyllium Husk	1tbsp	2.2	Baked Beans	100g	5.0
<b>Breads/Grains</b>			<b>Fruit</b>		
White Bread	1 slice	1.0	Apple	1 medium	3.4
White high fibre bread	1 slice	1.5	Banana	1 medium	3.3
Wholemeal Bread	1 slice	2.0	Orange	1 medium	3.5
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	1.5	Pear	1 medium	3.0
Wholemeal Pasta	1 cup	3.0	Canned fruit	1 cup	3.5
		7.9	Prunes	6 prunes	3.3

### 3 easy ways to increase daily fibre intake in children

- Make sandwiches/toast with wholemeal or multigrain breads or white bread with added fibre.
- Swap plain biscuits/sweets for wholemeal biscuits such as Wholemeal Saladas or Premiums.
- Leave skins on fruits & vegetables, where possible





## REFERENCES

<https://www.bowelcanceraustralia.org/constipation>

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/constipation>

<https://www.nrv.gov.au/nutrients/dietary-fibre>

Foodworks (Version 8) [Computer software]. (2015). High Gate Hill, Qld: Xyris Software.



### Need help with improving children's bowel health?

This article was written by Caitlin Dillon-Smith, Oscar Hospitality dietitian. Please contact OSCAR Hospitality's Dietitians via our contact details below.



## Dietetic Services for Childcare



**Menu reviews**

**Parent nutrition sessions**

**Cooking Club**

**Education sessions**

**DIETETICS**

**Staff nutrition training**

