

# Constipation

## Rare in babies who are solely breastfed

Constipation is a very common problem in children. Many children normally pass stools (faeces/poo) as far apart as every few days. Regardless, you should treat hard stools that are difficult to pass as constipation.

Breastfed infants will generally have more stools per day but occasionally can pass normal soft stools only once a week. Their stools vary more in frequency when compared to bottlefed infants. For example, breastfed infants produce anywhere from 5 to 40 bowel movements per week whereas formula-fed infants have 5 to 28 bowel movements per week. Switching the type of milk or formula can also cause constipation.

Many things contribute to constipation but infants and children who get well-balanced meals typically are not constipated.

Ask your health visitor for advice. In rare cases, constipation can be due to an underlying illness, so if the problem doesn't go away in a few days, it's important to talk to your GP.

### Health visitor says

To avoid constipation and help stop it coming back make sure your child has a balanced diet including plenty of fibre such as fruit, vegetables, baked beans and wholegrain breakfast cereals. We do not recommend unprocessed bran (an ingredient in some foods), which can cause bloating, flatulence (wind) and reduce the absorption of micronutrients. Drink plenty of fluids.

### Breastfed babies

Constipation is very rare in babies who are solely breastfed, but not uncommon in babies who have formula milk, or who have solid foods. Make sure you are making up the formula powder with the correct amount of water.

If your baby is already on solid foods then the juice or the fruit itself should be fine for providing relief. Fruits, such as apples, pears and prunes, contain sorbitol which is a natural laxative, helping the lower bowel retain water, which in turn helps the poo stay soft and easy to pass. For younger babies, check with your health visitor before you start giving anything other than milk.

Source: [www.NCT.org.uk](http://www.NCT.org.uk)

**1**  
My bottle-fed baby gets constipated.

**2**  
Try cooled, boiled water between feeds.

**3**  
If the problem persists speak to your health visitor or GP.