

Dietary Advice for Families

Constipation

Dietitian: _____

Contact: _____

What is constipation?

Constipation is a condition in which a child has fewer than two bowel movements a week, or hard, dry and small bowel movements that are painful or difficult to pass. It is common in children.

What are the nutritional causes of constipation?

- ◆ not eating enough fibre
- ◆ not drinking enough fluids
- ◆ poor dietary intake (not eating enough)

How can you increase dietary fibre?

- ◆ Choose wholemeal, granary or even half white-half wholegrain varieties of bread and rolls.
- ◆ Choose cereals labelled wholegrain e.g. Weetabix, Shreddies, Ready Brek, Porridge.
- ◆ Choose wholegrain pasta or rice or mix some into the white varieties.
- ◆ Eat more fruit and vegetables - try soups, raw vegetables, fruit salads or dried fruit. **Remember fruit juices and smoothies do not contain fibre.**
- ◆ Include pulses in meals e.g. add lentils to soups, stews and curries, add kidney beans or baked beans to chilli.
- ◆ Encourage your child to eat the skin on certain fruits e.g. apples, pears, plums.
- ◆ Leave the skin on potatoes when cooking them and encourage your child to eat them.
- ◆ Use wholemeal flour in baking where possible and offer baking that contains dried fruit or oats e.g. flapjacks, carrot cake, fruit loaf, fruit scones.

Fluids

- ◆ Not drinking enough fluids can lead to hard stools which are difficult to pass.
- ◆ Increasing fluid as well as fibre can help to make it easier to pass stools.
- ◆ Aim for 6-8 glasses of water or sugar free diluting juice every day (your child may need more in hot weather or after lots of physical activity).

Be aware that large volumes of milk or fruit juice can reduce your child's appetite so they may eat less food, increasing the risk of constipation.

Limit drinks of milk to about 300mls per day.

Poor dietary intake

- ◆ Offer small regular meals and snacks containing dietary fibre.
- ◆ Restrict biscuits, sweets and crisps especially as snacks between meals.
- ◆ Always make time for breakfast and include fruit and, or wholegrain bread or cereals.
- ◆ Try wholegrain cereal as a bedtime snack.
- ◆ All children under the age of 5 years should take age appropriate Vitamin D drops every day. Ask for them at your local chemist.

Physical activity is important and helps to stimulate the bowel, it is important to encourage your child to play outside, swim, walk or play team games regularly.

Meal ideas

Breakfast

- ♦ High fibre breakfast cereal such as Weetabix, Shreddies or porridge with a handful of dried fruit or chopped fresh fruit
- ♦ Slice of wholemeal, granary or half white half wholegrain toast

Lunch

- ♦ Baked beans served on wholemeal, granary or half white half wholegrain toast
- ♦ Lentil soup served with wholemeal, granary or half white half wholegrain bread
- ♦ Tuna salad sandwiches made with wholemeal, granary or half white half wholegrain bread

Dinner

- ♦ Chilli con carne made with kidney or baked beans and served with brown rice
- ♦ Chicken, vegetables and boiled potatoes with the skins left on
- ♦ Spaghetti Bolognese served with wholegrain spaghetti
- ♦ Dahl with wholegrain chapattis

Puddings

- ♦ Fruit salad topped with yoghurt
- ♦ Milky pudding served with fresh chopped fruit or handful of dried fruit

Snacks

- ♦ Fresh fruit
- ♦ Chopped vegetables such as carrot, celery and peppers served with dips