Constipation: Infant

Constipation (con sta PA shun) in infants less than one year of age is common, but it can be a source of concern for parents. Sometimes your baby is not really constipated, but must be given time to set his own schedule for having a bowel movement. Normally, an infant's stool is soft and easily passed. Even if an infant is not constipated, his bowel movements may be irregular.

In rare cases, constipation may be caused by a lack of nerves or by structural problems in the lower large intestine. Your baby can be tested for these conditions if your doctor feels it is necessary.

Signs of constipation

- Infrequent stools that are difficult to pass
- Straining more than normal to have a bowel movement
- Stools formed like small, hard pebbles; stools that are soft and mushy; stools that are wide and large
- Liquid stool (like diarrhea) that may be passing around solid stool that stays inside
- Abdomen (belly) swollen with gas
- Painful cramps

Treatment

- If your baby is old enough to eat strained foods, you may give him fruits and vegetables.
- If your baby is not eating jar baby food yet, you may give 2 to 4 ounces of fruit juices (prune, pear, cherry, or apple) per day. If his stools become too loose, give less juice to your baby.
- If your baby is eating rice cereal, it may help to switch to oatmeal or barley cereal. Rice cereal can cause constipation in some children.
- Do not give your baby enemas, laxatives or suppositories unless you are told to do so by the doctor.
**Medical therapy**

Your doctor has ordered the following treatments:

- Give your child the following medicine:
  ___________________________________

- Check your child’s temperature by rectum using a lubricated rectal thermometer. This may stimulate the baby to pass stool.

**When to call the doctor**

Call your child’s doctor if any of the following occurs:

- Your baby is irritable and seems to be having abdominal pain.
- You see blood in your baby's stool.
- Your baby's constipation does not improve with current treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns, call your baby's doctor at ________________________.