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Constipation

Signs that your child is constipated:

- Stomach pain, bloating, nausea or cramping.
- Painful bowel movements.
- Less frequent bowel movements (less than one per day).
- Bleeding with a hard bowel movement.
- Many days with irregular bowel movements
- Poor appetite
- Cranky behavior

Common causes of constipation:

- A diet that's **low in fiber** (Fiber helps stools stay soft so it can move through the body).
- A diet **low in fluids** (fluids help fiber work better)
- A diet high in **milk and dairy products**.
- A child purposely withholding stools. Can be due to problems during potty training, refusing to use certain bathrooms (in school, the park or a friend's house) and most commonly due to previous constipation and the fear of pain.

Treatment of constipation through diet:

- If your child has been constipated for a few days, you may have to use laxatives to clean his GI system before starting fiber rich foods. Adding fiber before this cleaning may cause more "back-up".
- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of fluids a day. Try water, seltzer, and unsweetened decaffeinated tea.
- Eat high fiber foods. Foods with whole grains, fruits, vegetables and oatmeal. Some good choices are apples, pears, broccoli and a variety of beans
- Add dried fruit such as raisins and prunes to your diet.

- Exercise helps get the bowels moving. Try walking around the block or up and down the steps a few times.

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