

CONSTIPATION/HARDLYWIGHEID

Bedwetting?

revision date 18012024

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weskus pediatrie / west coast paediatrics

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pr 0377597, mp 0279102, sama 11741, vat 4530258856, registration 2013/207395/21

GUIDELINES ONLY – THESE GUIDELINES DO NOT REPLACE THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL ADVICE FROM A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER AFTER HAVING PHYSICALLY EXAMINED THE PATIENT

HIERDIE IS SLEGS RIGLYNE – DIT VERVANG NIE DIE BEHOEFTE VIR KLINIESE ONDERSOEK VAN DIE PASIENT DEUR 'N PROFESSIONELE MEDIESE BEAMPTTE NIE

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How to alleviate [verlig] constipation:

1. Drink more water. $\pm 30\text{ml/kg/day}$. In cases where juice is preferred, drink clear apple or pear juice as these contain Sorbitol which stimulates movement of the intestine, dilute it with water on a 50/50 basis. In cases where children refuse to drink water it can be slightly flavoured with fruit juice. **It is best to learn your child to drink water from 4 months old.**

Remember that children learn by example – if you drink water and let them see how delicious it is, you will do them a life-long favour whilst also acquiring a healthy habit!

2. Eat more roughage and food containing tryptophane. Eat 5 portions of vegetables or fruit per day. Include prunes, dried fruit and prune juice in the diet. Wholegrain products like Weet Bix and bran (also digestive bran and oat bran) can be eaten regularly. Bran biscuits with poppy or other seeds are a delicious and an effective way to introduce bran in a diet. *Serotonin controls the movement of the intestines, but it cannot be absorbed. Tryptophane the precursor to serotonin is well absorbed.* It is present in most vegetables, seeds (Sunflower, Sesame, Lynn and Flax, also pumpkin pips) and in tree nuts (almonds, pecan, walnut, hazel etc). Flax seed powder is available at health shops or in the supermarket's Health departments and can be added to food. Benefibre is a taste-free, all-natural soluble fibre powder containing Inulin

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you can add to beverages and soft food, give between 5-15mg per day. – Get it at Clicks or other pharmacies.

3.Avoid white foodstuff like white bread, white sugar and white rice and peeled potatoes and pasta, especially 2-minute noodles – ***remember carbohydrates are sugar weight for weight!!***

4.Avoid too much milk! Not more than 500ml per day for children older than 6 months and only 250ml after one year of age! *Babies on formula milk suffering from constipation can use Novalac IT, Novalac Digest or Similac Total Comfort* which is specifically targeted at little ones with constipation; ask for it at your pharmacy.

5.Drastically reduce luxury foods, which includes sweet cool drink and refined snacks like cheese curls, chips etc.

6.There are beneficial bacteria in the intestines called probiotics. The ingestion of probiotics stimulates bowel movement. *Probiotics can be found in yoghurt (unpasteurized), homemade sauerkraut, very dark chocolate, apples, bananas, honey etc.* Probiotic supplements like Florabalance, Reuteri and Probi flora are available at most pharmacies.

7.Exercise! Although too little exercise is seldom a problem amongst children, ***slumping in a couch with junk-food in front of a TV/Computer/Mobile is asking for trouble*** – again, an example should be set...

8.Some children do not empty their bowels (last part of the large intestine) if they go to the toilet but just relieve the most intense pressure and retain some of the faeces as they are in a hurry to continue playing or are told to

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hurry up [en knyp!]. Regular toilet habits must be encouraged. The best time for passing stools is to have the child go to the toilet just after breakfast, *not in a rush, but relaxed*, at that stage there will be food in the stomach which will stimulate the entire intestine. They should not push down but relax and take their time! If this is not convenient an unhurried time following the evening meal will do. ***It is important that the intestine is regularly emptied and in so doing we will inculcate a habit which will have life-long positive effect.***

9. Feet and legs ‘dangling’ from the toilet seat cause pressure on nerves which control the intestine and bladder functions – ***have a support available for their feet. The underwear should be at the ankles or completely off and not at the knees. Open the knees wide apart to enable the muscles to relax.***

10. Sometimes a previous episode of passing a large hard stool can cause a small fissure or damage the skin at the anus. This causes the sphincter muscle (circular band of muscle that surrounds the anus) to go into a very painful spasm [kramp] when the child wants to pass faeces (stool). *This results in the child holding back the stool which in turn makes the stool bigger and harder.* In cases of painful stools passing the pain can be reduced by applying an ointment to relax the sphincter muscle – ask your doctor.

11. Certain medications contribute to constipation by making the intestine ‘lazy’. ***Read the inserted documents of medicines, especially cough mixtures, and medications against pain and fever! The ingredient ‘codeine’ can result in constipation!***

12. Remedies like Glycerine or Dulcolax suppositories as well as stimulants like Sennakot and Milk of Magnesia can assist evacuating the intestines, but

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they **may become habit-forming**, and result in making the intestine sluggish and 'lazy'.

13. An under active thyroid gland may result in constipation, one of the remedies is Eltroxin medication. If it runs in the family, inform your doctor.

14. Hereditary factors might play a role. Tell your doctor if there are family members with irritable bowels, spastic colon or constipation. Few cases are also known where family members are ill disposed toward gluten (a protein found in wheat) or lactose (a sugar found in milk – *lactose free milk can be bought!*) these factors must be brought to the attention of the family doctor.

15. Increased adrenalin levels, brought on by **stress**-like emotions or tensions at **home or school** can also cause constipation. Address stress factors at home and school and *partake in relaxing activities with the child!*

16. In cases of chronic constipation long term use of medication is needed. Preferably not something stimulating the intestine. We use stool softeners like Macrogol (Pegicol, Purgolene and Movicol), they assist in moisture retention of the stool, making it softer. It sometimes is necessary to flush the intestine. ***In this case the intestine is emptied, and it must be kept 'normal' for six months for the muscles to regain their tone – otherwise the 'baggy' intestine will just fill up again.***

17. Add a small pinch of salt to daily fluids. Latest research has proven that salt (NaCl) is actively excreted into the first part of the big bowel (colon). It pulls water along which will soften the stools.

18. Sometimes a warm, relaxing bath will help relax the sphincter muscles and stimulate the passing of a stool.

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How to empty out the big bowel (colon):

- Picoprep / Picolax 3 bags.
- Dissolve in warm water, flavour with apple juice if preferred.
- Cool it with ice as it tastes better cold.
- Drink first bag early in the morning followed by a glass of water over 1 hour.
- Follow with other 2 bags in a similar way.
- NB Protect the skin of the buttocks with a thick layer of Vaseline or something similar barrier cream.
- Paediatric Dulcolax 1 suppository with first bag.

How to keep the big bowel (colon) empty:

- Pegicol or Purgoped ½ to 4 bags dissolved in water or a sugar free cooldrink daily.
- Give according to stool consistency:
 - Increases with ½ bag if there was no stool or if stools are hard (Bristol 1 or 2 or 3 – see end of document!)
 - Give the same than previous day if stools are soft (Bristol no 4 or 5)
 - Decreases with ½ a bag if stools are too soft. (Bristol 6 and 7 - see end of document!).
- NB: drink another glass of water or sugar free cooldrink after the Pegicol.
- Do this for 3 months and decrease gradually.
- Observe the stools daily. If stools are hard or not passing daily again, restart Pegicol.

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Bristol Stool Form Scale for Kids:

Source <http://rb.gv/e4sk8>

THE BRISTOL STOOL FORM SCALE (for children)		
Choose your Poo!		
type 1		looks like: rabbit droppings Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
type 2		looks like: bunch of grapes Sausage-shaped but lumpy
type 3		looks like: corn on the cob Like a sausage, but with cracks on the surface
type 4		looks like: sausage Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
type 5		looks like: chicken nuggets Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 6		looks like: porridge Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
type 7		looks like: gravy Watery, no solid pieces ENTIRELY LIQUID