

FACT SHEET

Is my baby constipated?

Constipation is when your baby's poo becomes hard and becomes difficult to pass. They may go several days without passing poo, their poos may look like firm dry pellets that do not soak into their nappy and they may become very unsettled. Fortunately, constipation is usually easy to treat at home. **Your baby is not constipated if their poo is soft**, even if they have not had a dirty nappy for 1 or 2 days.

There's no 'normal' when it comes to how often babies poo. Breastfed babies rarely get constipated because breast milk contains a natural laxative. They tend to have yellow-coloured seedy poos that are often quite soft. Newborn breastfed babies may poo after every feed. **Older breastfed babies may go up to a week without pooing**. Formula-fed babies tend to have bulkier poos and generally go several times a day; this reduces as they get older. You'll quickly get used to your baby's bowel movements, so you'll be able to tell what's normal for them, every baby is different.

If you are formula feeding, make sure you use the correct number of scoops of formula to water according to the packaging.

It is normal for babies to strain and look like they are trying to poo more often. This is not usually a sign of constipation but just them getting used to the feeling of poo/wind forming and moving through their bowel.

Causes for constipation in babies.

There are a variety of reasons why your baby could be constipated, including a lack of fluids (dehydration). There are various reasons why your baby may not be getting enough fluids – it could be down to illness. Lack of fluids can make your baby's poo harder and more difficult to push out.

In general, babies with constipation can be managed by increasing fluid intake. However, a small number of babies become constipated due to a medical condition.

Treating constipation

Here are some tips on relieving constipation in babies at home.

- Lie your baby down and gently move their legs as if they are riding a bicycle, this will help get things moving. If your baby is comfortable lying down you can try a gentle tummy massage moving your hand around the tummy in a clockwise motion
- If your baby is bottle fed, then you can try giving a little extra cooled boiled water between some of their feeds.
- Breastfed babies **do not need extra water** but should be offered additional breastfeeds instead of this.

It can take a few days to get things moving, but if there is no improvement then you should speak with your Health Visitor or GP who may prescribe something to soften your babies' poo if needed or to rule out an underlying medical condition.