



National Institute
of
Diabetes and Digestive
and Kidney Diseases

Eating, Diet, & Nutrition for Constipation in Children

How can a child's diet help prevent or relieve constipation?

A child should drink water and other fluids, such as fruit and vegetable juices and clear soups, to help the fiber in his or her diet work better. This change should make the child's stools more normal and regular. A doctor can help you plan a diet with the appropriate amount of fiber to help treat a child with constipation. A list of high-fiber foods appears below. Use this table as a tool to help replace less healthy foods with foods that have fiber.

Children ages 1 to 18, depending on their age and sex, should get 14 to 31 grams of fiber a day.³ Fiber guidelines are not available for infants less than 1 year old, who normally eat little to no solid food yet. Talk with the infant's doctor about possibly breastfeeding the infant or what kind of foods he or she should eat.



Examples of Food That Have Fiber³

Beans, cereals, and breads	Fiber
1/2 cup of beans (navy, pinto, kidney, etc.), cooked	6.2–9.6 grams
1/2 cup of shredded wheat, ready-to-eat cereal	2.7–3.8 grams
1/3 cup of 100% bran, ready-to-eat cereal	9.1 grams
1 small oat bran muffin	3.0 grams
1 whole-wheat English muffin	4.4 grams

Examples of Food That Have Fiber³

Fruits

1 small apple, with skin	3.6 grams
1 medium pear, with skin	5.5 grams
1/2 cup of raspberries	4.0 grams
1/2 cup of stewed prunes	3.8 grams

Vegetables

1/2 cup of winter squash, cooked	2.9 grams
1 medium sweet potato, baked in skin	3.8 grams
1/2 cup of green peas, cooked	3.5–4.4 grams
1 small potato, baked, with skin	3.0 grams
1/2 cup of mixed vegetables, cooked	4.0 grams
1/2 cup of broccoli, cooked	2.6–2.8 grams
1/2 cup of greens (spinach, collards, turnip greens), cooked	2.5–3.5 grams

What should my child avoid eating if he or she is constipated?

If a child is constipated, try not to give him or her too many foods with little or no fiber, such as

- cheese
- chips
- fast food
- ice cream
- meat
- prepared foods, such as some frozen meals and snack foods, such as saltine or animal crackers, angel food cake, and vanilla wafers
- processed foods, such as hot dogs or some microwavable dinners, such as pizza, Salisbury steak, and pot pie

References

[3] U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010](#). 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office; 2010.

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