



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

Does your baby or toddler scrunch up their face and push really hard when making a dirty diaper? Does your child clog up the toilet when they go number two? Or do their poops look like little pebbles? Do they try to hold it in because it's painful to go to the bathroom? If so, you've come to the right place! In today's Small Byte, we're going to talk about poop! Specifically, how to prevent and treat constipation.

Constipation is usually defined as having infrequent, hard stools that are difficult or painful to pass. It's a common problem for both adults and children alike and can have many causes, including medication side effects, diseases of the gut like irritable bowel syndrome, and hormone disorders such as hypothyroidism. Untreated constipation is a frequent contributor to frustrating problems like bed wetting and urinary tract infections. It can interfere with toilet training and can also cause problems like anal fissures – small tears in the tissue that are painful and cause blood in the stool, hemorrhoids, and, if it goes untreated for long enough can cause soiling accidents (also called encopresis).

The single most common cause of constipation is eating a low-fiber diet.

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate (I know when you hear the word carbohydrate, you immediately assume it's bad for you, but let me tell you, not all carbs are bad!). Fiber is found only in food that comes from plants (meat and dairy don't have any fiber). It acts by drawing more water into the stool to make it softer. Fiber adds bulk to the stool so it is easier to pass. The health benefits of fiber go beyond making it easier to use the toilet: among other things, dietary fiber has been shown to reduce the risks of heart disease by lowering cholesterol, prevent colon cancer and other types of cancer, and can help control blood sugar in diabetes. Fiber is also important for keeping our bacteria healthy which in turn helps keep the rest of our body healthy.

When foods are processed, the fiber is stripped out leaving only the starchy carbohydrate (that's the bad carbohydrate you always hear about!) Starchy foods bind up the stool, which is why doctors always recommend them when you have diarrhea. But on a regular basis, they will tend to cause constipation. Many important vitamins are also lost during processing.

Some foods you can give your child to relieve constipation include:

- Fruit - especially pears, kiwi, grapes, oranges, peaches, and plums
- Dried fruit is also an excellent option. Oatmeal contains a lot of fiber, so having oatmeal with raisins for breakfast is a great way to start your day.
- Encourage lots of Vegetables - especially green leafy veggies like spinach and kale, broccoli, and peas
- Most of us know, from experience, that legumes like Beans, & lentils have tons of fiber but don't forget about Whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, farro, and barley, which are also excellent sources
- Last, Don't forget to offer plenty of water to drink to help the fiber do its job better.



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To prevent constipation, offer fewer starchy binding foods such as:

- Milk and cheese
- White rice, White bread, crackers, and pasta made with refined white flour
- Other foods to avoid include Chips, cookies, and puffs along with Sugary baked goods
- Also, avoid High fat processed meat like sausage, bacon, and hot dog, not only did these foods, like fiber, but they have been strongly linked to cancer, so avoid them even if you're not constipated!

Offering plenty of whole plant-based foods is the best way to prevent constipation. If your child already goes several days between poops or has hard, pellet-like poop, they may need to start taking a stool softener to help relieve the problem while you work to add more fiber-rich foods into their diet. If they have soiling accidents - even if the soiling looks like diarrhea - they may have a more serious form of constipation called encopresis. Talk to your doctor about which stool softener they recommend and other ways to treat this chronic issue.

Using the bathroom doesn't have to be a painful ordeal. Be sure to check out my upcoming episode on the [Top Tips for Picky Eaters](#) to learn how to get your child eat more healthy fiber-rich foods. Search the internet for delicious plant-based recipes and have fun letting your children help with meal planning and preparation.

(bite sound effect) I hope you've found this Small Byte helpful. As a bonus, you can get my favorite recipe for a fiber-packed breakfast smoothie in the show notes for this episode. Go to www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com for that and a ton of other helpful information. Thanks for listening and don't forget to eat your greens!