

Infant Constipation

Parents also worry that their babies are not pooping enough. A baby eating formula usually has a bowel movement at least once most days. For breastfed infants it depends on age. During the first month of life, stooling less than once a day might mean your newborn isn't eating enough. After that, however, breastfed infants may also go several days or even a week between bowel movements, using every drop they eat to make more baby, not poop. Infants normally work really hard to have a bowel movement, so straining at the stool isn't necessarily alarming, even when the infant cries or gets red in the face. For an infant to have a bowel movement is a major effort, and it shows. Just try to poop lying on your back and you'll get this picture. Actually, don't really do that. Imagining it should be enough.

For constipation concerns I always come back to the question of how the baby is doing.

- Is he excessively fussy?
- Is he spitting up more than usual?
- Is he having dramatically more or fewer bowel movements than before?
- Are his stools usually hard, or do they contain blood?
- Does he strain for more than 10 minutes without success?

These signs can all suggest actual constipation.

What You Can Do

After the first month of life, if you think your baby is constipated, you can try giving him a little apple or pear juice. The sugars in fruit juice aren't digested very well, so they draw fluid into the intestines and help loosen stool. As a rule of thumb, you can give 1 ounce a day for every month of life up to 4 months (a 3-month-old baby would get 3 ounces). Some doctors recommend using corn syrup like Karo to get the same effect, usually around 1 to 2 tablespoons per day. Once your infant is taking solids you can try vegetables and fruits, especially that old standby, prunes. If these dairy dietary changes don't help, it's time to call the doctor.