

# Constipation in Babies

The frequency of bowel movements in babies can vary a great deal, depending on whether they are breast or bottle fed. Sometimes babies can appear to strain and grunt, or go red in the face when they have their bowels opened but this does not mean they are constipated, unless their stools are hard. True constipation is rare in young babies and if constipation is suspected, further advice from a health practitioner should always be sought.

## How to Recognize Constipation in Babies

If your baby is passing hard stools which appears to cause pain and discomfort.

The consistency of the stool is more important than the frequency. Breast fed babies can open their bowels several times each day, to less than once per week and as long as the stools are soft, the baby would not be considered to be constipated.

## Causes of Constipation in Babies Could Include:

- Not enough water in made up formula milk
- A change in formula (particularly to 'follow on' formula or at the introduction of cow's milk)
- Not enough fluid intake, particularly in hot weather

## Tips to Avoid Constipation in Babies:

- If formula fed, check the formula is being made up properly, with the correct ratio of powder to water
- Offer extra cooled, boiled water in between feeds
- For older babies (over 5 months old) offer fruit juice or small amounts of stewed fruit (e.g prunes) or steamed vegetables
- A warm bath and gently rubbing the babies tummy clock-wise may help
- Gentle exercise. 'Cycling' the babies legs can help stimulate bowel movements
- Laxatives should not be given unless prescribed by a doctor

