

Constipation After Surgery

To Learn More

- Orthopedics
206-987-4179
- General Surgery
206-987-0237
- Urology
206-987-2509
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers 206-987-2280 (TTY).

The pain medicine given to your child after surgery can cause constipation. Each child is different, but a child can be considered constipated if they do not have at least one bowel movement each day. To prevent this problem try these steps:

- Give your child plenty of liquids to drink. Juice and water are both good choices. Water has no calories so it is a good choice. Prune and grape juices add some extra help to some children.
- Have your child eat lots of fruits and vegetables. High-fiber fruits such as cherries, prunes, pears and raisins are excellent. Some high-fiber vegetables are beans, peas, celery and broccoli.
- Increase bran. Offer foods such as graham crackers, granola, bran muffins and shredded wheat, which are high in bran. Older children may have popcorn. Fibercon cookies are another great source of bran and are found at some drug stores.
- Offer sugar-free or diet Gummee Bears which contain a sugar called sorbitol which is not absorbed in the body. Sugar-free or diet Gummee Bears act like a laxative for children. Only sugar-free and diet Gummee Bears work in this way, not regular Gummee Bears.

Do stool softeners help?

Making the changes to your child's diet that are suggested above often solves constipation. Stool softeners are prescribed for some children following surgery. Please ask the doctor to prescribe a stool softener before leaving the hospital if your child has a problem with constipation. Remember that your child will need to drink lots of fluids for the stool softener to work.

Glycerin suppositories found at most drug stores can also be used to treat constipation.

When should I call the doctor?

If your child does not have a bowel movement within 4 or 5 days following surgery, please call your primary medical doctor, nurse or surgery clinic for advice.