

Get the “Bees Moving”

I can safely bet that you never imagined yourself having so many conversations about “Bees Moving” BMs (pun intended) in your adulthood. Let me warn you, if you’re unaware now: you will not only talk about but obsess over, tirelessly wait for, celebrate, do special dances, pray for, and learn new techniques to bring about a bowel movement nearly every day of your child’s life. Constipation is a common complication for children with most neurological conditions and hydranencephaly is no exception; add the constipating factor of most anti-seizure medications and you have the recipe for misery.

Constipation is actually a common condition for most individuals, typically developing or not. Occasionally, when the problem is reoccurring and a varying degree of blockage has presented itself, diarrhea may fool you in to believing that constipation is not the problem... when in fact, it is! Not only will hydran-children have discomfort from the usual bloating and cramping, but may also have an increase in seizures or display other health complications that are otherwise stemming from a mysterious source. My rule is to always treat for constipation if you aren’t sure what is causing the change in your child’s behavior or health.

Common Complications Occurring with Constipation

Hemorrhoids are swollen, inflamed veins around the anus or lower rectum that can be caused by straining to have a bowel movement; may have rectal bleeding that appears bright red on the surface of stool, on wipes, or in the diaper after a BM.

Anal fissures are small tears in the anus that may cause itching, pain, or bleeding. In extreme cases, anal fissures that have not responded to at-home treatment can be treated with minor surgery.

Rectal prolapse can be caused by straining during BMs. The condition may lead to mucus leaking from the anus. Eliminating the cause of the prolapse, such as straining, is usually the only treatment needed. Severe or chronic prolapse requires surgery to strengthen and tighten the anal sphincter muscle or to repair the prolapsed lining.

Fecal impaction occurs when hard stool packs the intestine and rectum so tightly that the normal pushing action of the colon is not enough to expel the stool. An impaction can be softened with mineral oil taken by mouth or through an enema; occasionally manual extraction from yourself or care provider may be necessary as well.

Other associated complications or annoyances include: bad breath, headaches, acne, irritability, mouth ulcers, dark circles under the eyes, acidity and reflux, arthritis and tight, painful joints, high blood pressure, heart burn, insomnia, etc. =MISERY!

Common or not, any *problem* is one that should be eliminated. Not only is it uncomfortable, but it’s toxic to your child’s body in several ways (read more on the Paleo Diet, “*Practical Paleo*” especially, to discover how GI functioning effects whole body processes). Food should move through your body in a timely fashion: 18-24 hours start to finish. When you’re constipated, your entire gastrointestinal system is disrupted (called intestinal permeability or “leaky gut”).

Natural Alternatives to Pharmaceutical Interventions

The following recipes and alternative treatments for constipation relief were gathered from various sources around the web. Credit to the source is given when available. As with all information shared by Global Hydranencephaly Foundation, this is not meant as a substitution for seeking medical advice. Please use caution and discuss your approach with your child's doctor prior to start. While most of these are based on natural ingredients, there are still adverse reactions that can occur for some. One adverse symptom that could be common is uncomfortable gas and bloating, which will occur in children who are not accustomed to eating higher fiber foods. To prevent this, introduce the dietary interventions slowly.

Poop Goop Recipe #1

Tiffany Jensen

- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup prunes
- 1/4 cup dates
- 8 ounces prune juice

Mix together in a blender or food processor. Store in the refrigerator.

Dosage: 1-2 tablespoons/day.

Poop Goop Recipe #2

Tiffany Jensen

- 1 orange
- 1 apple (with skin)
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup prunes
- 1/2 cup prune juice
- 1/2 cup orange juice

Mix together in a blender or food processor. Store in the refrigerator.

Dosage: 1-2 tablespoons/day.

Poop Goop Recipe #3

Chris Taloff

- 1/2 pound figs
- 1/2 pound prunes
- 1 cup molasses **
- 1/4 pound powdered senna (from senna leaves if powder not available)

Grind figs and prunes very fine and mix. Warm the molasses and stir in senna. Take the senna and molasses that has been mixed together off heat and put in figs and prunes. Stir well and

preserve. Dosage: Begin with 1/4 teaspoon every night before bed. It's a maximum dose of 1/2 teaspoon per day. **DO NOT EXCEED THIS MAXIMUM DOSE!!**

Note on above Poop Goop recipe, from GHF: *Original recipe uses honey instead of molasses. This was probably changed because of the threat of botulism to children under the age of 1. If you choose to use honey for your older child, we recommend local raw honey and not store bought honey from a corporate supplier. Local, raw honey is more wholesome and carries other beneficial factors, an immunity boost and preventative for localized allergens to name a couple.*

Power Pudding

St. Joseph's Hospital Dietary Department and Bonnie Meyer, RN

1/4 cup applesauce
1/2 cup bran
3 cups diet liquid red gelatin*
1/4 cup prune juice

Mix all 4 ingredients and chill until almost set. Stir and portion into seven 1/2 cup servings.

*made with 1 large box gelatin, 1 1/2 cups hot water, 1 1/2 cups cold water; mix in blender.

Senna and Prunes

Lowell D. Katz, MD

Boil one ounce of senna leaves gently in one quart of water. Strain off leaves and simmer liquid with one pound of prunes until all or most of liquid has been absorbed.

Dose: one to three prunes every two to three nights.

Fruit Paste Recipe

1 lb prunes
1 lb raisins-pitted
1 lb figs
4 oz senna tea
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup lemon juice

Prepare tea using about 2 1/2 cups boiled water. Steep 5 minutes. Strain tea to remove tea leaves and add only 1 pint tea to a large pot, then add fruit. Boil fruit and tea for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and add sugar & lemon juice. Allow to cool. Use mixer or food processor to blend fruit mixture into smooth paste. Place in plastic container and place in freezer. Remove what you need each day, paste doesn't freeze solid.

Dose: 1-2 tablespoons per day; Spread it on toast, eat off a spoon or add hot water and make a drink.

Senna Bars

In a food processor mix the following ingredients:

- 12 oz. raisins
- 12 oz. dates
- 12 oz. prunes
- 8 oz. figs
- 2 oz. senna leaves or ground senna (in health food stores).

Spread in a greased 8"x12" pan and press to 1" deep. Top with graham cracker crumbs. Cut into 1 inch by 1 inch bars and they can be frozen.

Dosage: 1 bar a day to start. May be able to reduce to 1/2 bar later on.

Fruit Lax

- 8 ounces prunes, pitted
- 8 ounces dates, pitted
- 8 ounces raisins
- 3 ounces senna leaves (crushed) - available in health food stores

Blend all ingredients thoroughly with a meat grinder or food processor. (Do not use an electric mixer) Roll into one inch balls. Freeze. Store in sandwich zip lock bags (7 to a bag). May be stored in freezer indefinitely take out one bag a week and keep in refrigerator.

Dosage: one ball nightly; it may take several days to regain bowel regularity

Fruit-Lax

- 1 cup prunes, pitted
- 1 cup dates, pitted
- 1 cup raisins, seedless
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 2/3 cup prune juice

Steam dried fruit over boiling water to soften. Blend thoroughly in food processor until of spreading consistency. Refrigerate.

Dosage: eat 1-2 tablespoons alone or served on toast, crackers, hot cereal or other food items.

Fruit Lax Recipe

1/2 cup pitted dates
1 1/4 cup prune nectar
1/2 cup figs
3/4 cup raisins
1/2 cup pitted prunes

Simmer dates and prune nectar until dates are very soft. Put date mixture in a food processor and add figs, raisins and prunes. Blend to a smooth paste. Store in the refrigerator. Use as desired.

Special Jello

Nancy Faller, RN, BSN, CETN

1/4 cup apple juice (or other juice)
1/4 cup applesauce (or other pureed fruit)
2 Tablespoons Psyllium Powder or Citrucel Powder
1 small box flavored gelatin
3/4 to 1 and 1/4 cup water

Dietary Adjustment Recommendations:

Boost Fluid Intake- this is the ultimate preventative for constipation and dually important when making diet alterations in addition

The Five P's- Pears, Prunes, Pumpkins, Papayas, Peaches in any way, shape, or form!

Fruit Nectars- papaya, pear, and apricot especially

100% Fruit Juice- Prune, apple, or pear juices contain sugars which are poorly absorbed, pass through the intestine unabsorbed, and hold water in the poop. Other juices are helpful because their sugars are better absorbed. A baby or toddler constipated may be helped by giving 2-4 ounces of one these juice once a day and 4-6 ounces once a day for older infants. It is important that the juice be 100% fruit juice (not watered down) or the sugars are not in high enough concentration to do their job. Prune juice contains more unabsorbed sugars so with prune juice use less and water it down somewhat (e.g. start with 1 ounce and add 1 ounce of water for a total of 2 ounces).

Coconut Products- When you cut out dairy, which you'll see recommended below, sub with coconut milk products. Be sure to use all natural, not processed and sugar added. Adding coconut milk, water,

butter, sugar, and oil will not only aide in constipation relief but has some huge health boosts built in to help with a long list of complications: seizures, spasticity, skin conditions, immunity, and more!

Chlorophyll- Purchase at any health food section/store. Works to detoxify and eliminate any constipation-causing food products. ½ teaspoon every 2 hours for 6-8 hours initially, then that amount with each meal for 3-4 days. You can also just introduce it as a regular element of your child's diet.

Exotic Fruits (pureed or juiced)- figs, dates, apricot, and DEFINITELY papaya

Lemon- Add juice from half a lemon to your 100% fruit juice, your purees, or just to a glass of warm water with Epsom salt and raw honey (snag some Manuka honey).

Molasses- the good 'ol fashion kind! Have two tablespoons of molasses daily; added to coconut milk, 100% fruit juice, or mixed with nut butters. Also, high in calories if you're looking to increase your child's weight.

True Whole Grains- read the package to be sure they're really there

Flaxseed- Centuries old constipation cure that goes overlooked; effective because the whole seeds contain 6-12% mucilage (a slimy, gum-like compound that provides a temporarily soothing and protective coating along the entire digestive tract). It provides both bulk and softness to the stool. It's inexpensive and you should be able to find it at your local health food or grocery store. Keep in mind that if the seeds aren't crushed, ground, or broken, they will pass through your system intact and you'll lose the benefits (buy whole and use a blender or grinder to process, as the effective oils oxidize and spoil quickly).

Oats/Oatmeal- Only the "old-fashion" variety will do, since the instant is partially cooked and includes other not-so-great ingredients. Don't buy too much at a time either, since the good fats in oats will go bad sooner than the general rule for oats of 2 months (when kept in a cool, dry, dark place in an air-tight container). Oats are beneficial because they have both soluble and insoluble fiber—8 grams in one cup of uncooked oatmeal. In addition to containing the most soluble fiber of any food (55%), oats have 45% insoluble fiber. Insoluble fiber, the part of the plant that is not broken down by your digestive system, absorbs water and swells, making the stool bulky, soft, and easy to pass—relieving constipation.

Senna- questionable to some, but its effectiveness is proven. Some avoid the leaf due to it's less than desirable side effects: diarrhea, abdominal pain, heartburn, and/or nausea. The trick is to combine other herbs to counteract the unwanted results. I recommend "Soothing Mint Get Regular" tea by Yogi (www.yogiproducts.com). An alternative that you can make at home fairly easily: Bring one quart of water to a boil and turn off the heat. Then, add ½ teaspoon of each of the following: caraway seeds, fennel seeds, peppermint leaves, and senna leaves; use a tea steeping device is helpful. Let steep for 15 minutes and then strain. One cup in the morning and another at night is the recommended dosage to relieve constipation.

Cultured Foods- Sauerkraut, live-culture yogurt, kefir, etc. (especially when homemade!)- Valuable because fermented foods contain probiotics, which crowd out harmful microbes that may impair digestion and elimination.

LIMIT- banana, apple, rice, dairy (sub other calcium and vitamin D rich foods or supplement), refined carbohydrates (think “whites” rice, pasta, bread), substitute alcohol-based medications for a requested alternative at the pharmacy, cocoa products including chocolate,

Spinach, Kale, and other dark leafy greens- Raw and juiced or pureed or cooked, they’re great for the digestive tract by working to cleanse, reconstruct and regenerate. Half a glass of “green” juice a day is all you need!

Milk of Magnesia- 2-3 tablespoons with 6oz of water. Works 4-8 hours.

Epsom Salt- aka magnesium sulfate has the added benefit of boosting the body’s ability to absorb nutrients. If that isn’t enough, it also helps with muscle spasticity/rigidity. Add it to bathtime or sprinkle some in to some purees to kill some of the sweetness.

Essential Oils:

Any combination of these; dilute (1-2 drops to 1-2 tablespoon coconut oil) and apply to abdomen: black pepper, rosemary, basil, lemon, peppermint, marjoram, Digest Zen, ginger, fennel, orange, rose, sandalwood. (black pepper & fennel or rosemary & marjoram are great)

“Digest Zen” from the DoTerra line

“Di-Gize” or “Digest and Cleanse” capsules from the Young Living line

Another Oil Recipe: 2 drops of fennel, 2 drops of peppermint, 2 drops of “Digest Zen” in a capsule.

Acupressure Points (hold points or rub in circular motion for 10-15 seconds with any above oil)

Large Intestine 4- This is a number one point for dealing with constipation. Located on the top of the hand, on the web where the thumb and the index finger meet. Avoid this point on pregnant women.

Large Intestine 11- This point doesn’t require much pressure. Rub this point in a circular motion, and you can use it for relief during an uncomfortable bowel movement. This point is on the crease of your bent elbow.

Hara Point- This point is situated two inches below the belly button and is also considered a very vital point to be stimulated for constipation. This point should be stimulated using the index, middle and ring finger, by applying pressure only till tightness is felt near the point. The pressure should be maintained for 30 seconds. The pressure can either be applied through constant pressing or by circular motions with light pressure on the point. The stimulation of this point has profound effects on the overall functioning

of the digestive system. It relieves abdominal cramps, relieves constipation and even reduces flatulence. Avoid this point if pregnant.

Abdominal Massage for Constipation:

When doing any method of massage for your child, it is important that they are calm, warm, comfortable, and in a relaxing environment. Do not massage if your child is upset, crying, or restless because you do not want them to associate this time with a time of discomfort and agitation. A perfect time for massage is after bath time. If using oils, mix ahead of time.

Lie your child on their back on a comfortable, yet firm, surface. Place a pillow under their knees for more support and comfort.

Step 1 – Always connect with your child and “get permission” by talking to them and explaining that you will be doing some massage time. Rest one hand on their lower belly and the other on the center of their heart. Connect with their breath by breathing with them throughout; this helps them relax and breathe deeper.

Step 2 – Apply your oil blend in a clockwise motion around the abdomen massaging very lightly. Knead the stomach like a cat, alternate hands in a slow pumping rhythmic motion. Go slow and explore areas that feel more tense.

Step 3 – Bring hands to the left side of their lower abdomen. Allow your fingers to sink into the tissue a couple of inches above the inner left hipbone then reach under the bone. Stretch the tissue toward the bellybutton. Scooping and stretching the tissue. Repeat 5 - 10 times and then do the same thing under the left ribcage stretching and scooping down towards the belly button. Move to under the right ribcage same stretching a scooping motion towards the belly button and last move down to the right inner hipbone scooping and stretching again up towards the bellybutton.

Step 4 – Start making a circular clockwise motion and go around the entire length of the large intestine starting at the inner right hipbone. Go around and around 5 – 10 times with your palms of both hands.

Step 5 – Massaging the ileocecal valve (this is a flap between the large & small intestines and often malfunctions or performs poorly). To locate the ileocecal valve locate top right hip and go in 2 inches and down 2 inches (this will vary from person to person and less for a small child) it feels like a marble under a pillow. It normally will feel tender for most; massage it in a rotary motion for 5 seconds. Then go up to the right upper arm with a closed fist and briskly stimulate for 10 seconds, don't do more than 10 seconds.

Step 6 – Begin on the right side around the appendix area and massage in small circles in a single direction moving upward from the appendix to the abdominal area to right rib cage. Now continue massage in circles across to the outer point of the left rib cage. Massage down towards the groin area. During this part really take notice of any hard, congested or hot areas and spend a little extra time there.

Back off pressure and go really light if child indicates discomfort. It will get less sensitive with time and you want this to be an enjoyable thing for them.

Step 7 – End with 3 more clockwise circles. Then rest your hands on the abdomen sending warmth into the abdomen.

NOTE: If your child does not tolerate the massage, discontinue. Even if you only manage a minute, or less, you are benefiting them. Slowly increase the time as they allow, but never force them to participate. This technique will build a strong GI system and a healthy colon.

There are SO many alternative approaches to relieving constipation symptoms, this is only a glimpse of the options available.