



Integrative Therapies Program for
Children with Cancer
Herbert Irving Cancer Center, 7th Floor

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COPING WITH CONSTIPATION

General Guidelines That Help:

- Eat meals at regularly scheduled times.
- Drink liquids throughout the day. The minimum amount your child should have is 50-60 mL/kg for children and 150 mL/kg for infants. Keep in mind that fruits contain a lot of water. Many of the fruits listed for constipation are 50-90% water. Feeding your child fruits is another way to increase their water intake.
- Try a hot drink or prune juice 30 minutes before your child's typical time for a bowel movement.
- Fruit juice can stimulate the bowels. Juices most effective at this are prune, apple, pear, black cherry, and syrup of figs.
- A high fiber diet may help. You should work with a nutritionist for ways to increase the fiber in your child's diet. This change should be done slowly, an immediate change to a high fiber diet could prevent your child from absorbing calories, vitamins/minerals, and may interfere with certain medications. These also can cause uncomfortable bloating and gas. Foods high in fiber are:

Vegetables (followed by # of grams of fiber in a ½ cup serving)- Cooked turnips (4.8g), cooked okra (4.1g), cooked Brussels sprouts (3.8g), cooked peas(3.2g), cooked french style green beans (2.8g), sweet potatoes with flesh(2.7g), cooked cabbage (2.6g), kale(2.5g), broccoli (2.4g), raw carrots(2.3g)

Fresh Fruits- Canned pears (3.7g), apricots w/skin (3.5g), raspberries (3.3g), mangos w/out skin (2.9g), apples w/skin (2.8g), strawberries (2.8g), oranges w/out skin (2.9g)

Dried Fruits- Figs (2.3g), apricots (2.0g), prunes (1.7g)

Whole-grain breads- wheat-bran (12.3g/ ½ cup), whole-grain or rye bread (2.0g/slice)

****Caution-** High-fiber foods could harm patients with obstructions, lesions in the colon and certain types of cancer. Check with your physician before proceeding with a high-fiber diet.

*****Caution-** If your child is neutropenic, low white blood cell count, avoid berries, fruit/vegetables with skin, dried fruits and cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower).

- Try and increase the activity of your child; go for walks, play games, cooking.
- Avoid foods that may cause bloating and gas: raw cabbage, beans, carbonated beverages.
- Limit the amount of cheese and refined processed carbohydrates. For example: White flour products

- Add wheat germ, dried fruits or berries to cold or hot cereal. Hot cereal may stimulate bowels over cold cereal.
- Snack on nuts and dried fruit
- Seeds-Sprinkle the seeds or ground powder of psyllium or flax over cereals or yogurt. Start slowly at about 1/3 the recommended amount for children and gradually increase to the full amount (See a nutritionist if you have questions).
- Recipes that may help

Fruit Smoothies with extra fiber

1 banana
 ½ apple (with peel but without seeds or core)
 ½ cup yogurt with active cultures (or ice-cream)
 ½-1 tsp of wheat or rice bran
 ½ cup of pear, apple, or black cherry juice
 Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix until you achieve the consistency you like.

High-Fiber Jam

2 cups water
 1 ¼ cup dried, chopped, pitted dates
 1 ¼ cup dried, chopped figs
 1 tbsp corn meal
 Combine all ingredients in a glass, ceramic, or stainless steel pot.
 Bring to a boil. Simmer and stir until thickened.

*Recipes from the “*The Holistic Pediatrician*” by Kathy Kempner, M.D., M.P.H.

Herbs/Complementary Therapies that may help:

**The use of herbs is not recommended. The information is provided because many have inquired about these particular agents. Although, the following herbs have not been found to be harmful in small studies, there is still limited information available about their use in children in conjunction with chemotherapy. It is imperative that the use of herbs be discussed with your child's physician before proceeding with any of these therapies.*

- Yoga for kids
- Cooking with kids may help to increase your child’s activity.
- There are many herbs that can be used as laxatives, but these can be contraindicated in many patients. The herbs can decrease absorption of essential nutrients and medications; therefore, before proceeding with any laxative check with your physician. Some of the most common herbal laxatives are: senna, psyllium, aloe vera, rhubarb, dandelion root, and butternut. The latter two act as mild laxatives.
- Massage Oils. Marjoram, Black Pepper, Rosemary added to avocado oil. See Safe, Natural Remedies for Babies and Children by Amanda Cochrane for massage techniques.
 For any massage oils, the oil should not be applied directly to your child’s skin. Oils should first be diluted in a carrier oil (Almond, Grapeseed, or Sesame). To ensure the quality of the essential oils you purchase, all bottles should state the plant species the oil is from.
Dosage for children of essential oils:
 Up to 2 years old: 5 drops of essential oil in 50 ml or lotion or carrier oil
 2 years and older: 10 drops of essential oil in 50 ml of lotion or carries oil