

Children's Health

Avoiding Constipation In Children

(NAPSA)—Children become constipated for many reasons, and though rarely serious, constipation can cause discomfort or pain. It can also cause frustration for parents if they don't know how to help their child find relief.

What You Should Know

Children often get constipation from a low-fiber diet or from withholding stool because they don't want to stop playing, don't want to use a public bathroom or are afraid of having a painful bowel movement. Some signs of constipation are:

- fewer bowel movements than usual
- hard, dry or large stools
- painful or difficult bowel movements
- abdominal pain and cramping
- stool in the underwear

What to Do

Constipation is often helped by:

- eating high-fiber foods
- having healthy bowel habits
- taking laxatives—but only with a doctor's approval

If constipation lasts longer than two weeks or is accompanied by symptoms such as bloody stools, vomiting, fever, a swollen abdomen or weight loss, see a doctor. Constipation is usually harm-



Constipation, though rarely serious, can be a problematic condition for children and parents.

less, but it can be a sign of a more serious health problem.

For More Information

The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse has produced a fact sheet titled *Constipation in Children*. The publication is available at www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov/ddiseases/pubs/constipationchild.