

STOOLS AND HYGIENE

Bowel Movements

There are considerable variations in the size, color, consistency and frequency of stools in the newborn baby. Stools may be yellowish, brown, or greenish and may be quite firm or of a loose, pasty consistency.

Almost all babies will stop nursing, grunt and get red in the face when they are passing a stool. This occurs regardless of the consistency of the stool.

Attention has been focused unnecessarily on daily bowel movements as a requisite of good health. Constipation is defined as hard stools that are passed with considerable difficulty and discomfort to the baby. Some babies have rather firm stools, but have no difficulty in passing them. If the bowel movements are hard and painful to pass your baby may be constipated. This is usually managed with a modification of the baby's diet or medication to make the stools softer. Suppositories, enemas, and laxatives should not be used without consulting the office.

If you are breast-feeding your baby, the stools will be liquid, yellow or mustard-colored. During the first few weeks he may have a bowel movement every time he nurses. These runny stools associated with breast-feeding should not be confused with diarrhea. At two or three months of age some breast-fed babies experience a change in their stool pattern. They may have but one bowel movement every 5 or 6 days. The stool will always be soft and mushy. This is normal for him. As long as your baby is happy and is gaining weight, there is no need to worry about the change in his bowel movements.

If your baby is being formula fed, the type of stool may vary considerably with the formula being used. In general, stools made from cow's milk tend to be less frequent than in breast fed babies. The consistency is pastier and the stools are usually lighter in color. Sometimes, especially during the newborn period, stools with some types of formulas may be quite runny liquid and irritating to the skin in the diaper area. This may necessitate a change in the formula.

Don't hesitate to consult our office if you are concerned about your baby's bowel movements. Most of the problems that you will encounter can be managed over the phone.

Hand Washing

It is very important to carefully wash your hands before handling or feeding your baby. Good hand washing will help reduce respiratory, gastrointestinal and skin infections.