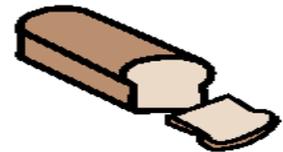


## Increasing Fibre and Fluids

Making even small changes to increase the fibre in your child's diet can help relieve constipation. Fibre helps food to pass through the bowel by adding bulk to the poo and holding on to water (making it softer to pass). A high fibre diet is healthy, so try to change the whole family's eating habits. Remember to increase fibre slowly into the diet and to try to increase fluids too.

### **Try 1 or 2 of the changes below:**

- Try high fibre white bread i.e. Best of Both, 50 : 50 or wholemeal breads
- Instead of refined breakfast cereals such as corn flakes and crisped rice, try wheat biscuits, Shreddies<sup>®</sup>, Cheerios<sup>®</sup>, porridge or try mixing a spoonful of high fibre cereal with your child's usual cereal
- High fibre snacks include flapjacks, oatcakes, hob nobs, muesli bars, oaty or nutty cereal bars - whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years of age due to choking risk
- Vegetables are a good source of fibre - fresh, frozen or tinned - you can blend them in to soups and sauces. Offer raw vegetables as finger foods.
- Beans, peas and pulses (lentils, chickpeas) are high in fibre so try lentil soup, baked beans on toast or in baked potatoes
- Fruit is a good source of fibre - fresh, dried or tinned (in fruit juice)



### **What about infants and younger children?**

At around 6 months or when your baby is ready to start solid food you can start with mashed vegetables and fruit.. Cooked vegetables and chopped up soft fruits are good finger foods. Wholemeal or 50:50 breads, and wholegrain breakfast cereals i.e. wheat biscuits, porridge, can be given when infants are 6 months old.

Although high fibre foods are healthy they can be bulky, so children under the age of 2 may not be able to eat enough to meet their energy needs. Therefore a combination of lower and higher fibre cereal and breads should be offered.



## **Increasing fluids**

Encouraging your child to drink more fluids can help soften poo and make it easier to pass.

## **How much fluid?**

- Children aged 1 - 5 years should have 6 - 8 cups/day (2 pints or 1 litre/day)
- Older children will need between 6 - 8 mugs/day (3 - 4 pints or 1½ - 2 litres/day)

More tap water may be needed in hot weather or if your child is very active or has a fever.

## **What drinks to choose?**

- Tap water and milk are the best drinks to offer an infant or child
- From 2 years old semi-skimmed milk can be given instead of full fat milk as long as your child is growing well
- Fresh or pure fruit juices should be unsweetened and diluted 1 part juice to 1 part water and given at meal times only
- Flavoured milks and smoothies contain sugars and can cause tooth decay so also keep to mealtimes when these drinks are less damaging to teeth
- Fizzy drinks such as cola should be avoided as they are high in sugar and are damaging to teeth
- Diet fizzy drinks are acidic and can damage the enamel on your child's teeth so should also be avoided.

## **Advice for infants**

At around 6 months of age solid food can be introduced. As the amount of solids increase, the intake of breastmilk and infant formula may start to slowly reduce. To avoid constipation it is important to replace this fluid with tap water (once baby is over 6 months of age the water does not need to be boiled and cooled). Babies who are breastfed may not require additional fluid because breastmilk is both a food and fluid.

From 6 months, if water is given it should be in a free-flow cup and be offered at meal times. Babies under 12 months do not need fruit juice or smoothies. However, if you choose to give these to your baby, dilute the juices/ smoothies one part juice to 10 parts water, and limit them to mealtimes. Baby drinks/ juices are not recommended.

If constipated and below 6 months of age then formula fed babies can have extra drinks of cooled, boiled water between their feeds. However, breastfed babies below 6 months do not need to be given extra water, but should be offered more frequent breastfeeds.