

Hirschsprung Disease: Food tips to help with pooping.

Hirschsprung Disease:

In a child with Hirschsprung disease, nerves are missing in the anus (where poop leaves the body) and rectum (part of the large intestine that is between the colon and anus) and in part or all of the colon (large intestine). The part of the colon without nerves cannot relax. So, poop cannot leave the body. Hirschsprung disease is treated with surgery. However, even after the surgery, your child may still have problems pooping.

Help your child poop better by changing what foods they eat. These food tips will also relieve gas or bloating. The goal is for your child to have at least 1 or 2 soft (peanut butter-like) poops each day.

Eat less sugar and sugar alternatives (other sweeteners):

- Sugar and sugar alternatives can cause gas, bloating, and diarrhea (loose poops).
- Try not to give your child sugary foods such as candies, cookies, soda, juice, sports drinks, and syrup.
- Stay away from sugar alternatives, such as sucrose (Splenda), sorbitol, and mannitol.
- Read nutritional labels and choose foods and drinks with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving.

Eat high-fiber foods:

- Adding fiber can add bulk to poops without causing constipation (hard poop).
- Increase the amount of fiber gradually. It may cause gas and bloating at first.
- Give high-fiber food with every meal.
- Make sure your child is drinking enough fluids. Water is best.
- Add high-fiber foods to lower-fiber ones. For example, sprinkle ground flax or chia seeds into pasta dishes or add a few tablespoons of bran to breakfast cereal.
- Add natural wheat bran, nuts, or psyllium to your child's food.

Keep track of how your child feels after eating dairy products:

- Milk and milk products have a type of sugar called lactose. The body uses an enzyme called lactase to break it down in the colon. If your child's body does not make enough lactase, they may have a tough time absorbing lactose and become gassy and bloated or get diarrhea.
- Decrease the amount of lactose you give your child to see if they feel better.
- Try giving lactose-free milk or soy drinks.
- Give your child yogurt and harder cheeses like Swiss or cheddar. This may be easier for them than drinking a glass of plain milk.
- Limit milk to 16 ounces a day once your child is older than 12 months.

Make sure your child eats regularly:

- Offer 3 meals and 1 or 2 snacks each day.
- Your child should eat every 3 hours to help their colon work throughout the day.

Keep track of how your child feels after eating:

- Not all children feel the same after eating certain foods.
- How your child feels can depend on how much of their colon is affected by Hirschsprung disease, whether part of their colon was removed, or if they have an ostomy.
- It may be helpful to keep a record of what your child eats and how they feel after eating. For example, how often they poop, what the poop looks like (hard, soft, watery), and whether they feel gassy or bloated.

Food Group	Better foods for your child to eat	Foods your child should limit or not eat
Vegetables and fruit	• All fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables • Fresh or frozen fruit (maximum of 1 cup a day) • Lower-sugar fruits such as apples, pears, and berries • Prunes	• Dried fruit, canned fruit in syrup, fruit cups, canned pie fillings • Fruit juice (all types) • Applesauce
Grain products	• Whole grain bread, buns, and crackers • Whole grain unsweetened pasta • Brown rice, quinoa, barley, millet • Unsweetened cereals	• White bread and buns • White rice and pasta • Donuts, cakes, cookies, sweet rolls, pastries • Sweetened cereals
Milk and alternatives	• Yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese • Lactose-free milk or soy milk	• Flavored milk or soy drinks • Ice cream, pudding, custard, sugar, or honey-sweetened yogurt • Almond or rice milk
Meat and alternatives	• Any meat, poultry, fish • Eggs, tofu, nuts • Beans, lentils, and chickpeas (offer small amounts – they can cause bloating)	• Sweet marinades • Glazed meat products
Sweet foods	• Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit • Homemade fruit smoothies • Homemade fruit popsicles • Yogurt and fruit parfaits	• Candy, chocolate bars • Cereal, coffee, and tea with added sugar or sweetener • Syrup, jam, honey
Drinks	• Water, tea (plain/unsweetened), (plain) coffee	• Soda, chocolate milk, and other flavored milk or soy drinks • Rice or almond milk • Drinks that have sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, sucralose (Splenda) • Sports drinks (Gatorade or Powerade)