## **†**|**†**

### **Patient Presentation**

<u>Constipation</u> is common in childhood, especially in those who have limited mobility due to disability or other causes. Despite many possible diagnoses, at least 90% of affected children have functional constipation.

Symptoms include:

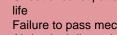
- · Difficulty or straining when passing stools
- · Passing stools less frequently than normal

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### 'Red Flag' Signs & Symptoms

Does the patient present with the following?

- Onset of constipation from birth / first few weeks of life
- Failure to pass meconium (> 48 hours after birth)
- Abdominal distension: severe or if present with vomiting
- · Evidence of poor / faltering growth
- · Persistent blood in stool
- · Spinal or neurological abnormality
- Abnormal appearance / position / patency of anus
- · Deformity in lower limbs such as talipes



## Investigations

Not indicated in evaluating for functional constipation

In cases of refractory constipation +/- <u>faltering growth</u> / <u>short</u> <u>stature</u>, consider thyroid function tests and coeliac screen

## **Treatment Approach**

- · Maintenance therapy:
  - Polyethylene glycol 3350 plus electrolytes (macrogol 3350 with potassium chloride, sodium bicarbonate and sodium chloride)
  - Add a stimulant laxative if polyethylene glycol 3350 plus electrolytes does not work
  - Substitute a stimulant laxative if the child <u>does not tolerate</u> polyethylene glycol 3350 plus electrolytes
  - Continue medication at maintenance dose for several weeks after regular bowel habit is established
  - Laxative therapy may be required for several years
- Disimpaction can be initiated in primary care

Refer if symptoms persist, or if refractory constipation

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# Constipation (paediatric)

Quick Reference Guide
Access the full KPP for

further information

Consider escalation of care to the Emergency Department or Specialist Practitioner if required

Follow local protocols



### **Safety Netting Advice**

- Do not use dietary interventions alone as first-line treatment for idiopathic constipation
- Diet should include adequate fluid intake / fibre, including foods with a high fibre content

Seek medical attention if:

'Red Flag' signs or symptoms develop



#### Resources

Further information for the public:

- NICE clinical guideline CG99
- · Constipation, the NHS website
- <u>ERIC</u>, The Children's Bowel & Bladder Charity
- Bladder & Bowel UK



### **Related KPPs**

- Abdominal Distension
- Abdominal Pain