

Toddlers Diarrhea

What is toddler's diarrhea?

Toddler's diarrhea is also called chronic nonspecific diarrhea of childhood. It affects children from 6 months to 5 years of age. Children with toddler's diarrhea can have 3 to 10 loose stools per day.

These stools usually occur during the day when the child is awake and sometimes immediately after eating. The stool is frequently watery or loose. It may also contain food particles, although it should not contain blood. The child may have days when stools are more formed.

Despite the diarrhea, the child continues to grow and gain weight as long as the diet contains enough calories. The child is active and has a normal appetite. Abdominal pain is not typical and could suggest other causes, such as infection. Toddler's diarrhea is common, and children with this condition will get better on their own by school age.

What causes toddler's diarrhea?

The cause of toddler's diarrhea isn't exactly known. However, intestinal contents probably move more quickly through the colon of children with toddler's diarrhea. This decreases the amount of fluid that can be absorbed by the body.

In addition, consuming excessive amounts of sweetened beverages (such as juice or sports drinks), fruits, sweetened candies, or sugary foods is likely to cause loose stools. Sweeteners such as sorbitol or high-fructose corn syrup can act as laxatives if enough are consumed.

What else can cause this diarrhea?

After discussion of the symptoms and a physical exam, your doctor may consider tests to evaluate other possible causes. Some conditions your doctor may consider include the following:



- Giardia, Cryptosporidium, Clostridioides difficile, also known as Clostridium difficile (C. diff) along with other bacteria and parasites. These infections can cause chronic diarrhea and may need treatment with antibiotics or antiparasitic medications.
- Celiac disease - sensitivity to gluten, a protein in wheat, rye, and barley, which can be tested by a screening blood test.
- Inflammatory bowel disease - chronic inflammation in the large and/or small bowel.
- Malabsorption - a group of diseases in which the bowel cannot absorb certain nutrients or calories, resulting in poor growth despite normal calorie consumption.
- Lactose intolerance - an inability to digest lactose due to lactase enzyme deficiency in the intestines. Minimizing dairy products improves the symptoms. This is less common in toddlers and often occurs in older children.

How to treat toddler's diarrhea?

- Avoid sweet drinks with sorbitol or fructose. Your child should not receive more than 4–6 ounces per day.
- Avoid other sweetened clear liquids, such as juice. Give your child the recommended amount of milk for his or her age, and water as requested.
- Fiber supplements can sometimes add bulk to the stool.
- Increased dietary fat can decrease diarrhea. For example, switching to whole milk may be the only dietary change necessary.
- Other changes in the diet are usually unnecessary and can interfere with growth.
- Medications are rarely recommended and should only be used under a physician's guidance.

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IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general educational information as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

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