

Toddler's Diarrhea

What is Toddler's Diarrhea?

Toddler's diarrhea is also known as chronic nonspecific diarrhea of childhood, and it affects children from 6 months to 5 years of age. Children with toddler's diarrhea will have 3-10 loose stools per day. These stools typically occur during the day when the child is awake and sometimes immediately after eating. The stool is frequently watery or loose and may have food particles in it although the stools 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 appropriately as long as the diet contains enough calories. The child is active and has a normal appetite. Abdominal pain is atypical and could suggest other causes such as infection. Toddler's diarrhea is not considered a disease, and children with this condition will get better on their own by school age.

What Causes Toddler's Diarrhea?

The cause isn't exactly known but intestinal contents probably move more quickly through the colon of children with toddler's diarrhea which decreases the amount of fluid that can be absorbed. Also, some toddlers drink excessive amounts of sweetened beverages, such as juice or sports drinks, which are likely to cause loose stools. Sweeteners such as sorbitol or high-fructose corn syrup can act as laxatives if enough is consumed.

What else can cause this diarrhea?

After discussion of the symptoms and a physical exam, your doctor may consider tests to evaluate for other possible causes.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS :

Some diseases your doctor may consider:

- 1) **Giardia, Cryptosporidium, or Clostridium difficile (C. diff)**—these are infections that can cause chronic diarrhea and are treated with antibiotics.
- 2) **Celiac disease**—sensitivity to gluten, a protein in wheat, rye, and barley. A screening blood test can be drawn.
- 3) **Inflammatory bowel disease**—a disease of chronic inflammation in the large and/or small bowel.
- 4) **Malabsorption**—a group of diseases in which the bowel cannot absorb certain nutrients or calories. The result is poor growth in spite of consuming normal calories.
- 5) **Lactose intolerance**—an inability to digest lactose, which improves after minimizing dairy products.



How to treat Toddler's Diarrhea

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

To locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at: www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not 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.

