
Bowel Movements and Urination (Baby)

When you have a baby, dirty diapers are a part of daily life. But changing diapers is more than just a chore. It's also a way to keep track of your baby's health. This sheet will help you know what's normal and what's not.

Wet diapers

For the first few days after birth, your baby should have at least 2 to 3 wet diapers each day. After the first few days, your baby should have at least 6 to 8 wet diapers a day. Fewer could mean the baby is not getting enough breast milk or formula. If this happens, contact your baby's health care provider.

Normally, a baby's urine is clear or light yellow. Changes in the smell and color may mean there is a problem. Dark yellow or pinkish urine may mean the baby is not getting enough fluid.

Contact your baby's provider if you have concerns about your baby's urine.

Bowel movements

In the first few days of life, babies need to feed enough to pass the stool they have been making before birth. This stool is called meconium. The first few stools will be black or tarry. They will then change to brownish-green and then yellow around 5 days of life. If this has not happened, contact your baby's health care provider.

For the first few weeks after the meconium has passed, many babies have a bowel movement after each feeding. Eventually this changes. Starting around 3 to 6 weeks old, breastfed babies may have only 1 bowel movement a week. This is because breastmilk leaves very small solid waste to pass through the digestive system. Formula-fed infants should have at least 1 stool a day.

Sometimes a baby may get constipated. Constipation in a baby is when stools are firm and hard. A baby may strain or fuss. But all young babies will strain and grunt when having a bowel movement. That's because the muscles of the rectum and anus are not yet organized enough to fully relax as stool passes through. If you think your baby is constipated, contact their provider.

Very runny or watery bowel movements may mean the baby has diarrhea, especially if it is a sudden change. Contact your baby's provider if this occurs.

Bowel movements vary from baby to baby. Talk with your baby's provider about your baby's bowel movements. Note how often they occur and what they look like.

Normal stool

Depending on whether your baby is fed by breast or bottle, the stool may look different. For instance:

- Breast milk results in light yellow stool that looks like watery cottage cheese.
- Formula results in stool that's tan or yellow in color, firmer, and pastier.

Signs of a problem

Contact the health care provider if your baby has:

- A fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised by the provider.
- Fewer than 6 to 8 wet diapers a day after the first few days of life.
- Frequent, thin, watery stool.
- Hard, dry formed stool.
- Pale tan or greyish stool.
- Blood in the stool or urine.
- Mucus in the stool.
- Changes in their stool or urine, such as a sudden increase or decrease in frequency.