

High fibre diet & the sweet corn test

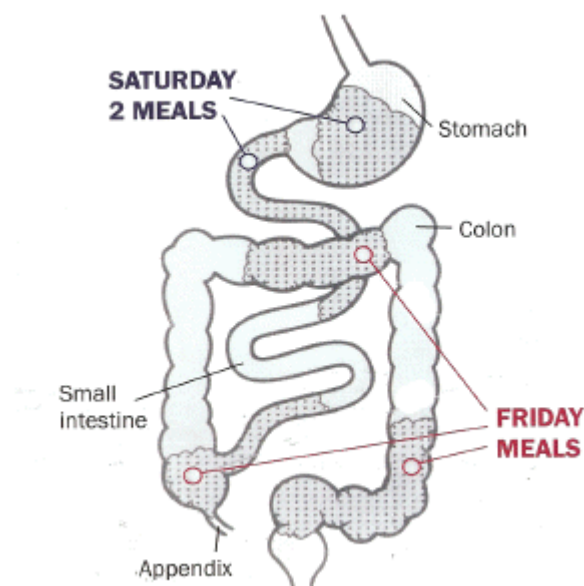
Parent / Caregiver Information

Children's Health Service, Wellington and Kenepuru Hospitals

One of the most common causes of tummy (abdominal) pain in children is a lack of fibre in their diet. This can cause their bowels (intestines) to cramp trying to drive a small amount of poo (faeces) towards the anus.

Even children who do a poo every day can have a transit time (the time it takes for food to get from their mouth to the anus) of more than 24 hours.

The ideal transit time is less than 24 hours. It is usually very difficult to tell whether the poo that a child passed this morning was from last night's dinner or last week's. This is where the sweet corn test can help.



The sweet corn test

This is really very simple. Give your child a meal that has some whole-kernel sweet corn in it. The sweet corn can be fresh, frozen or tinned. The sweet corn can simply be served as another vegetable on the plate, or mixed into a dish such as a casserole.

The idea is to then measure how long it takes for the sweet corn to appear in your child's poo. You can turn this in to a game with other siblings, by turning the test in to a "race" for the first child to have corn in their poo in the toilet.

This will often increase your chances of seeing the sweet corn in the poo before the toilet is flushed as your child will want to "win" the race.

You should see the sweet corn the day after the meal was eaten. If the sweet corn takes longer than 24 hours to appear it is taking too long and your child needs to have more fibre in their diet.

Fibre

Fibre is important for the normal functioning of your bowels (intestines). Small amounts of fibre are found in fruit and vegetables and larger amounts in wholemeal bread and bran.

The easiest (and cheapest) way to add fibre to your child's diet is to add some cooking bran (Bran flakes - found in the bulk bins in the supermarket or packaged in the "baking" section) to their bowl of breakfast cereal in the morning.

To measure your child's transit time use the "sweet corn test" described above. If the transit time is more than 24 hours, add one dessertspoon full of bran to your child's breakfast every morning for the next two weeks.

Then repeat the sweet corn test. If the transit time is still more than 24 hours increase the dose of bran to one and a half dessertspoons every morning for the next two weeks.

Keep repeating the sweet corn test and increasing the amount of bran on your child's breakfast until your child has a consistent transit time of less than 24 hours.

This dose of bran will usually need to be used on their breakfast for the rest of their life. We recommend occasional "sweet corn tests" to make sure that the amount of bran your child requires doesn't change as they grow.

Who to contact

If you have any concerns or questions regarding your child following discharge from hospital,

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please contact your GP or one of the after hours medical centres. If they have any concerns they will contact the hospital.

After hours medical centres

Kenepuru Hospital Accident & Medical

Open 24hrs a day everyday (04) 918 2300

Paraparaumu -Team Medical Coastlands Shoppingtown

Open 8am -10pm everyday (04) 298 2228

Waikanae

Mon-Thurs 7pm-8am, Fri 5pm-8am, and at anytime during weekends or Public Holidays (04) 293 6002

Accident & Urgent medical centre Wellington

Open 8am-11pm every day (04) 384 4944

Healthline

If you are unsure if your child needs to visit your GP or after hours medical centre you may wish to call Healthline for free advice. Call free anytime on 0800 611 116

**Remember
In an emergency call 111**