Constipation is hard, dry, painful, rock-like bowel movements (stools or BMs) or no bowel movement (a stool or BM) for several days.

You can tell if you are constipated by:

- Changes in your normal bathroom pattern
- Straining on the toilet
- Bleeding with BMs
- Smear of stool in underwear (leaky BMs)
- Change in appetite
- Stomach cramps and bloating
- Painful and/or hard BMs

Constipation often happens when you:

- Don’t drink enough fluids, especially water.
- Don’t eat enough fiber and roughage (found in breads, cereals, fruit, and vegetables).
- Eat and drink too many milk products.
- Wait too long to use the bathroom (hold BM).
- Have a change in your schedule, especially with stress.

Home care

- You should have a balanced diet that includes plenty of raw vegetables and fruits (carrot sticks, lettuce, celery, broccoli, peaches, pears, apricots) and breads and cereals high in fiber (Raisin Bran®, Cheerios®, oatmeal, graham crackers, whole wheat bread).
- Try fruits such as apricots, peaches, pears, and prunes, and try juices such as cherry, prune, grape, and apple.
- Limit the amount of constipating foods like cheese, ice cream, yogurt, cooked carrots, squash, applesauce, and bananas.
- Drink water more often.

Call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- Your bottom itches, hurts, or is bleeding.
- You have a lot of soiling in your underwear (leaky BMs).
- You have not had a bowel movement for 3 days after you have changed your diet.

Go to the emergency room or your health care provider's office if you have severe stomach pain, with or without fever.