

NURSE NOTES (SHARYL IDEN, RN – 441-6292)

Does your child often complain of a belly ache? If so, it may be constipation. According to the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC), “constipation is defined as having a bowel movement fewer than three times per week. With constipation, stools are usually hard, dry, small in size, and difficult to eliminate.”

Some common causes of constipation are:

- not enough fiber in the diet
- dehydration
- milk
- ignoring the urge to have a bowel movement (generally because they do not want to interrupt their play)

In order to try to prevent constipation, try the following:

- have your child eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains
- have your child drink plenty of 100% juice and water
- limit caffeine-containing drinks such as soft drinks
- watch for over-consumption of milk, cheese, and fatty meats
- encourage your child to use the restroom as soon as they feel the urge to go
- if your child complains of a belly ache, encourage them to try to use the restroom and rehydrate with water

Is your child suffering from seasonal allergies? Allergies occur when pollen, mold, dust or other irritants kick your immune system into high gear, triggering a release of histamines, those chemicals that are mostly responsible for allergy symptoms.

Common symptoms of seasonal allergies in children include:

- Red and/or itchy eyes • Watery eyes • Watery or runny nose
- Congestion • Sinus pressure and congestion
- Itching in the throat and/or mouth • Allergic shiners – dark circles under eyes
- Persistent cough-caused by post nasal drip and irritation (not all coughs are colds!)
- Chronic rubbing or itching of the nose-which often results in a red line across the lower bridge of the nose-one of the most telltale signs of seasonal allergies in children!
- Frequent sniffing • Snorting and snoring
- Difficulty breathing • Fatigue (often caused by lack of sleep due to symptoms)

In order to try to prevent allergies, try the following:

- Keeping all doors and windows closed as much as possible during the pollen season will prevent the pollen from entering the home.
- During the pollen season avoid hanging the laundry outside to dry as the dried clothing or bedding will carry pollen indoors.
- Air conditioners help this as they can filter out the pollen. Additionally windows need to be closed during air conditioner use.

Treating allergies (<http://www.drpaul.com/factsheets/seasonallergies.html>)

- When using allergy medications parents should be aware that these treat the symptoms and not the cause of the allergy in their children. The best approach is to identify and then avoid what a child is specifically allergic to.
- Antihistamine medications given by mouth, as needed, can help certain children with allergic symptoms. While the older antihistamines caused sleepiness, the newer ones tend not to. It is a good idea to avoid antihistamines that make a child drowsy or sleepy during the day.
- Today specific "anti-allergic" eye drops containing anti-histamines can help relieve eye symptoms.
- Inhaled nasal preparations (pumps) containing steroids are considered to be safe and effective in children who suffer from nasal allergies. These medications are effective if used regularly for a period of time. Using inhaled nasal steroids on and off irregularly is not very effective.
- Over the counter nasal decongestant sprays are generally not recommended in children. In fact prolonged use of these medications may actually make matters worse.
- Asthma symptoms brought on by seasonal pollens are treated with the appropriate asthma medications as they will not respond to the antihistamine (anti-allergic) medications.