

m e m o

DATE: May 6, 2020
TO: WIC Coordinators and Staff
FROM: Carole Kelnhofer, WIC Training Coordinator
SUBJECT: Infant Stools: What's Normal? – Topic of the Month

Providing parents information on infant stooling characteristics may help to alleviate some more common concerns. There may be times when parents are unsure whether their breastfed or formula fed infant is stooling normally. Changes in the infant stool may be the first sign of concern in dietary or health patterns; it is important to know what to look for.

There are a variety of colors and consistencies that are considered normal for infant stools. In the first few days of infant life, stools are dark brown or black and sticky; this is called meconium. The stools will gradually change into a dark green before becoming yellow and seedy looking. Finally, as baby ages and begins solids, the type of food eaten will determine the regular color and consistency of stools.

Questions to ask when concerned about infant stools

- How is feeding going?
- Is baby breast or formula feeding or both?
 - There are differences in stool amounts and consistency depending on how infant is fed.
- How often is baby feeding?
 - Overfeeding can lead to gassiness, diarrhea, and high weight gain.
 - Underfeeding can lead to dehydration, constipation, and low weight gain.
- If formula fed, how is the formula being made?
 - There are many risks with improper dilution of infant formula.
- What else is baby taking in?
- Any medical conditions to be aware of?
 - A medical condition or allergy can cause changes in stool.

Typically, infants stool 1-3 times per day early on, but less often as they get older. Breastfeeding infant stool will often be looser and have a softer consistency than those fed formula. The color

and consistency of stool can vary for each infant, often from day to day. **A red flag is a stool that is whitish or red; these may indicate a medical condition and should be referred to a pediatrician.**

The key is to identify when something is not normal and go from there. Let's look at a comparison between stools of breast and formula fed infants.

Formula Fed Infant				Breastfed Infant			
<i>Days 1-2</i>	2-3 wet diapers each day	At least 1 dirty diaper each day	Poop is black	<i>Days 1-2</i>	1-2 wet diapers each day	1-2 dirty diapers each day	Poop is black
<i>Days 3-4</i>	2-3 wet diapers each day	At least 1 dirty diaper each day	Poop is greenish yellow	<i>Days 3-4</i>	3-4 wet diapers each day	2-3 dirty diapers each day	Poop is greenish yellow
<i>Day 5 and after</i>	At least 5-6 wet diapers each day	At least 1 dirty diaper each day	Poop is tan or yellow, and soft (no firmer than peanut butter)	<i>Day 5 and after</i>	At least 5-6 wet diapers each day	At least 3-4 dirty diapers each day	Poop is yellow

Source: Wichealth.org

Two of the most common concerns participants have regarding stools are constipation and diarrhea.

Questions to ask when constipation is a concern

- Is baby excessively fussy?
- Is baby spitting up more than usual?
- Is baby having fewer stools than normal?
- Are stools unusually hard or contain blood?
- Does baby strain for more than 10 minutes without stool success?
- Are the stools hard and dry?

Questions to ask when diarrhea is a concern

- Is baby younger than 3 months?
- Is there a rectal temp of 100.4 F (or above)?
- Is baby vomiting?
- Does baby lack energy, act irritable, or refuse to feed?
- Are there signs of dehydration, dry mouth or dry diapers?

- Are the stools watery or mucus filled?

If the answers to any of these questions are yes and you have explored dietary changes with the participant, refer to the infant's pediatrician.

WIC's Role

The [Nutrition Risk Assessment Policy](#) (MOM Section 5.3) explains the importance for WIC staff to obtain and synthesize information about a participant to most appropriately individualize WIC services. This includes asking questions that allow for education based on the participant's concerns and offering referrals when necessary. The [Infant Nutrition Assessment](#) can be used to most accurately determine if there are concerns with health and feeding.

Participant Centered Counseling (PCS)

Using PCS during the Nutrition Assessment includes using [open-ended questions](#), this allows participants to share what infant feeding looks like to them in their own words. You may need to include the use of the [Training Tool for Infant Nutrition Assessment](#) probing questions to get to the most accurate picture of feeding behaviors. Starting a question with "How do you..." or "What have you..." is a great way to probe for additional information.

Example Questions: "How do you feel feeding is going?" or "What has your doctor told you about infant stools?" or "What have you tried to resolve the constipation?"

Baby Behaviors

The Baby Behavior guide to infant communication through cues can be used to assist parents to recognize what their infant is trying to tell them. The [Baby Behavior clips](#) are available through the *My MN WIC App* and through MDH YouTube online. Additionally, behavior clips can be found on [WIChealth.org](#) through the lesson titled "Understanding Your Newborn: Sleep, Crying, and Cues".

Recognizing Infant Cues

- Recognizing infant feeding cues: [Fullness](#) vs [Hunger](#).
- Recognizing infant communication cues: [Crying can mean many things](#).

Resources

Diapers of the Breastfed Baby – Laminated visual for use in clinic. See [WIC Agency Materials Order form](#).

[Baby's First Bowel Movements](#). [Healthychildren.org](#).

[Infant Nutrition and Feeding Guide](#): *Diarrhea*, p. 140 and *Constipation*, p. 141.

[Baby Center](#). [BabyCenter.org](#), check out the video "Baby poop guide: 11 types of baby poop".

[Baby Goo Roo](#). The scoop on poop.

[Wichealth.org](#). Breastfeeding: 3 Tips for a Well-Fed Baby.

[Wichealth.org](#). Formula Feeding: 3 Tips for a Well-Fed Baby; includes link to [Paced Bottle Feeding video](#).

Continue to send any topic suggestions or feedback to carole.keinhofer@state.mn.us or talk to your State WIC Consultant.

References – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Wichealth.org](https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource/index/5010) (<https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource/index/5010>)

[Nutrition Risk Assessment Policy](#)

(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/program/mom/chsctns/ch5/sctn5_3.pdf)

[Infant Nutrition Assessment](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/assessment/briefinfantpostpartum.pdf>)

[Open-ended questions](#)

(https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/HealthyPeopleFamilies/wic/Documents/orwl/ce_open-ended_1_staff.pdf)

[Training Tool for Infant Nutrition Assessment](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/assessment/infant.pdf>)

[Baby Behavior clips](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2020/topic/0108babybehavior.pdf>)

[WIChealth.org](#) (<https://www.wichealth.org/>)

[Fullness](#) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ALUXZf8q3o>)

[Hunger](#) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST_twjboalg)

[Crying can mean many things](#) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHDp2kS_8LE)

[WIC Agency Materials Order form](#)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/forms/cfh/wicmaterials/index.html?target=AGENCY>)

[Baby's First Bowel Movements](#) (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/Babys-First-Bowel-Movements.aspx>)

[Infant Nutrition and Feeding Guide](#)

(<https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/wicworks/Topics/FG/CompleteIFG.pdf>)

[Baby Center](https://www.babycenter.com/404_what-are-normal-bowel-movements-for-formula-fed-babies_1334497.bc) (https://www.babycenter.com/404_what-are-normal-bowel-movements-for-formula-fed-babies_1334497.bc)

[Baby Goo Roo](https://babygooroo.com/articles/the-scoop-on-poop) (<https://babygooroo.com/articles/the-scoop-on-poop>)

[Wichealth.org](https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource/index/5010) (<https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource/index/5010>)

[Wichealth.org](https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource?id=5011) (<https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource?id=5011>)

[Paced Bottle Feeding video](#)

(<https://www.wichealth.org/Member/Resource/ResourceFlow?currentResourceId=5011&id=5042>)