

INCLUSION CRITERIA

Children between 6 months – 4 years old, with at least 2 of the below symptoms within 1 month:

- Less than 2 bowel movements per week
- History of stool retention
- History of painful or hard bowel movements
- History of large diameter stools
- Large fecal mass present in rectum (if imaging performed)

Children > 4 years old, with at least 2 of the below symptoms:

- Less than 2 bowel movements per week
- History of stool retention
- History of painful or hard bowel movements
- History of large diameter stools that may obstruct toilet
- Large fecal mass present in rectum (if imaging performed)
- At least 1 episode/week of fecal incontinence

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- < 6 months of age
- Congenital heart disease
- Cystic fibrosis
- Hirschsprung's disease
- Short bowel syndrome
- Spina bifida
- Abnormal thyroid gland
- Hx of spinal or abdominal tumor
- Known dysmotility syndromes
- On chemotherapy or radiation
- Hematology/Oncology Patients
- Hx of abdominal surgery
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Refractory constipation – routine failed management
- Known renal disease

MEASURES

- Decrease 72 hours ED Returns

ADMISSION CRITERIA¹

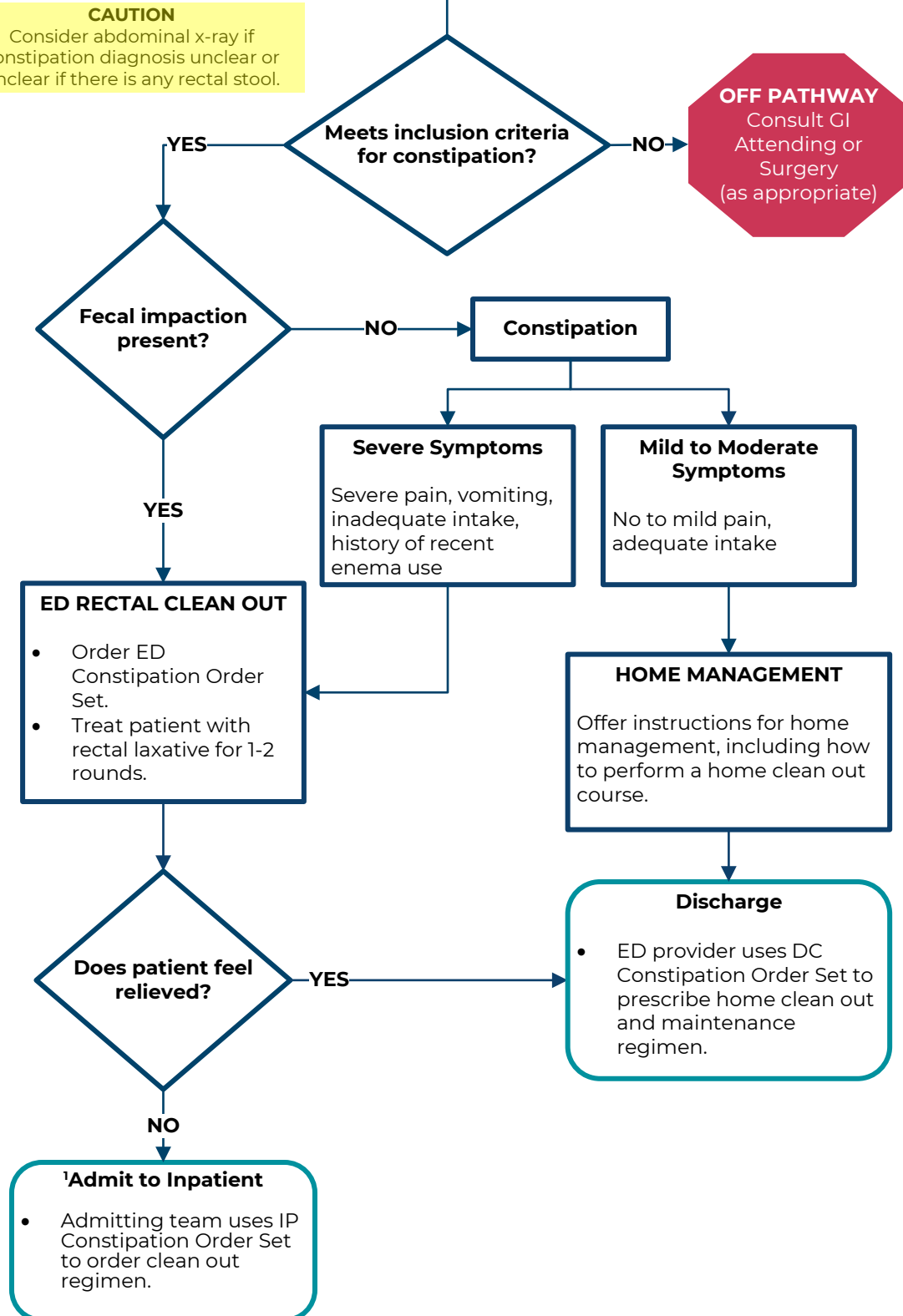
- Unable to be managed at home, such as previous failed home management or behavioral concerns
- Abdominal distention and/or pain

Initial Assessment

- **Patient meets inclusion criteria to follow Functional Constipation pathway.**
- Obtain comprehensive history and physical.
- Ask about any past or current constipation management.
- Are clean outs sufficient at home?
- Is the patient seen by outpatient GI provider already? Who/where?

CAUTION

Consider abdominal x-ray if constipation diagnosis unclear or unclear if there is any rectal stool.



Impaction / Clean Out	Dose			
	6 months - < 2 years	2 - 5 years	6 - 11 years	≥ 12 years
Polyethylene glycol (GoLYTELY)	N/A	40 mL/kg/hr NGT	40 mL/kg/hr NGT	40 mL/kg/hr NGT
Polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX)	17 g ONCE PO	34 g ONCE PO	85 g ONCE PO	85 g ONCE PO
Magnesium Citrate	N/A	90 mL ONCE PO	210 mL ONCE PO	300 mL ONCE PO
Bisacodyl enema	N/A	5 mg ONCE Rectal	5 mg ONCE Rectal	10 mg ONCE Rectal
Glycerin suppository (pediatric)	0.5 suppository ONCE Rectal	1 suppository ONCE Rectal	1 suppository ONCE Rectal	N/A
Glycerin suppository (adult)	N/A			1 suppository ONCE Rectal
Normal saline enema	10 mL/kg ONCE Rectal	10 mL/kg ONCE Rectal	10 mL/kg ONCE Rectal	10 mL/kg ONCE Rectal
Sodium phosphate (FLEETS pediatric)	N/A	0.5 enema ONCE Rectal	1 enema ONCE Rectal	N/A
Sodium phosphate (FLEETS adult)		N/A		1 enema ONCE Rectal
Mineral Oil	N/A	59 mL ONCE Rectal	59 mL ONCE Rectal	118 mL ONCE Rectal

Clinical Pathway Abbreviations			
Abbreviation	Definition	Abbreviation	Definition
AC	Acute Care	kg	kilogram
ED	Emergency Department	mg	milligram
DC	Discharge	mL	milliliter
g	Gram	N/A	Not applicable
GI	Gastroenterology	NGT	Nasogastric Tube
Hx	History		

Disclaimer: The clinical pathways are based upon publicly available medical evidence and/or a consensus of medical practitioners at Nemours Children's Health ("Nemours") and are current at the time of publication. These clinical pathways are intended to be a guide for practitioners and may need to be adapted for each specific patient based on the practitioner's professional judgment, consideration of any unique circumstances, the needs of each patient and their family, and/or the availability of various resources at the health care institution where the patient is located.

VERSION MANAGEMENT

- Version 1.0 (3/24/2026): Go Live.
- Version 1.1 (5/8/2026): Hematology/Oncology patient population added to Exclusion Criteria.

Questions about this pathway should be directed to **clinicalpathways@nemours.org**.

AUTHORS & REFERENCES

Delaware Valley: Magdy Attia (Emergency Medicine), Fernando del Rosario (Gastroenterology), Monique Devins (Emergency Medicine), Chalanda Jones (Acute Care), Heemali Kamdar (Gastroenterology), Cayenne Liew (Gastroenterology)

Central Florida: Kamal Chavda (Emergency Medicine & Urgent Care), Roberto Gomez-Suarez (Gastroenterology), Kimberly Brady Fitzpatrick (Emergency Medicine & Urgent Care), Jennifer Mills (Urgent Care), Vi Ngo (Acute Care)

- Chang L, Chey WD, Imdad A, Almario CV, Bharucha AE, Diem S, Greer KB, Hanson B, Harris LA, Ko C, Murad MH, Patel A, Shah ED, Lembo AJ, Sultan S. American Gastroenterological Association-American College of Gastroenterology Clinical Practice Guideline: Pharmacological Management of Chronic Idiopathic Constipation. *Gastroenterology*. 2023 Jun;164(7):1086-1106. doi: 10.1053/j.gastro.2023.03.214. PMID: 37211380
- de Geus A, Koppen IJN, Flint RB, Benninga MA, Tabbers MM. An Update of Pharmacological Management in Children with Functional Constipation. *Paediatr Drugs*. 2023 May;25(3):343-358. doi: 10.1007/s40272-023-00563-0. PMID: 36941393
- Gordon M, MacDonald JK, Parker CE, Akobeng AK, Thomas AG. Osmotic and stimulant laxatives for the management of childhood constipation. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2016 Aug 17;2016(8):CD009118. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD009118.pub3. PMID: 27531591
- Gordon M, de Geus A, Banasiuk M, Benninga MA, Borrelli O, Boruta M, Darbari A, Dore-Stites D, Gould M, Hawa J, Jones KB, Khlevner J, Kilgore A, Mousa H, Nurko S, Sinopoulou V, Tabbers M, Thapar N. ESPGHAN and NASPGHAN 2024 protocol for paediatric functional constipation treatment guidelines (standard operating procedure). *BMJ Paediatr Open*. 2025 Feb 4;9(1):e003161. doi: 10.1136/bmjpo-2024-003161. PMID: 39904543; PMCID: PMC11795385.
- Koppen IJ, Benninga MA, Tabbers MM. Is There A Role for Pre-, Pro- and Synbiotics in the Treatment of Functional Constipation in Children? A Systematic Review. *J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr*. 2016 Jul;63 Suppl 1():S27-35. doi: 10.1097/MPG.0000000000001220. PMID: 27380596
- LeLeiko NS, Mayer-Brown S, Cerezo C, Plante W. Constipation. *Pediatr Rev*. 2020 Aug;41(8):379-392. doi: 10.1542/pir.2018-0334. PMID: 32737251
- Ng RT, Lee WS, Ang HL, Teo KM, Yik YI, Lai NM. Transcutaneous electrical stimulation (TES) for treatment of constipation in children. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2016 Jul 5;7(7):CD010873. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD010873.pub2. PMID: 27378432
- Paul SP, Broad SR, Spray C. Idiopathic constipation in children clinical practice guidelines. *Arch Dis Child Educ Pract Ed*. 2016 Apr;101(2):65-9. doi: 10.1136/archdischild-2014-307956. PMID: 26276787
- Piccoli de Mello P, Eifer DA, Daniel de Mello E. Use of fibers in childhood constipation treatment: systematic review with meta-analysis. *J Pediatr (Rio J)*. 2018 Sep-Oct;94(5):460-470. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2017.10.014. PMID: 29474804
- Rachel H, Griffith AF, Teague WJ, Hutson JM, Gibb S, Goldfeld S, Trajanovska M, King SK. Polyethylene Glycol Dosing for Constipation in Children Younger Than 24 Months: A Systematic Review. *J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr*. 2020 Aug;71(2):171-175. doi: 10.1097/MPG.0000000000002786. PMID: 32520829
- Tabbers MM, DiLorenzo C, Berger MY, Faure C, Langendam MW, Nurko S, Staiano A, Vandenplas Y, Benninga MA, European Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition, North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology. Evaluation and treatment of functional constipation in infants and children: evidence-based recommendations from ESPGHAN and NASPGHAN. *J Pediatr Gastroenterol Nutr*. 2014 Feb;58(2):258-74. doi: 10.1097/MPG.0000000000000266. PMID: 24345831 Wood RJ, Yacob D, Levitt MA. Surgical options for the management of severe functional constipation in children. *Curr Opin Pediatr*. 2016 Jun;28(3):370-9. doi: 10.1097/MOP.0000000000000345. PMID: 26963948
- Wallace C, Sinopoulou V, Gordon M, Akobeng AK, Llanos-Chea A, Hungria G, Febo-Rodriguez L, Fifi A, Fernandez Valdes L, Langshaw A, Saps M. Probiotics for treatment of chronic constipation in children. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2022 Mar 29;3(3):CD014257. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD014257.pub2. PMID: 35349168
- Wegh CAM, Baaleman DF, Tabbers MM, Smidt H, Benninga MA. Nonpharmacologic Treatment for Children with Functional Constipation: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *J Pediatr*. 2022 Jan;240():136-149.e5. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2021.09.010. PMID: 34536492
- Wojtyniak K, Szajewska H. Systematic review: probiotics for functional constipation in children. *Eur J Pediatr*. 2017 Sep;176(9):1155-1162. doi: 10.1007/s00431-017-2972-2. PMID: 28762070