Gut Beneath the Surface

a parent guide to constipation, tummy aches, and the GAS pedal

Days without a poop. Tummy aches every morning.

“He goes once a week, and it hurts when he does.” “She says her tummy hurts almost every day.” “We’ve tried fiber, prune juice, and every powder on the shelf.” If that sounds like your house, you are not alone, and you have not missed something obvious.

Digestion is not just about what goes in. It is run by the nervous system. This guide explains that layer in plain language and gives you simple ways to help at home.

01

Digestion happens on the BRAKE

Your child’s nervous system has a gas pedal and a brake. The gas gets them going. The brake is called rest-and-digest for a reason: it is the mode that moves food through the gut.

GAS	BRAKE
Fight-or-flight.	Rest-and-digest.
Digestion slows down.	The gut moves and works.

When a child’s foot is stuck on the **GAS**, the body treats digestion as a low priority. Things slow down, tummies tighten, and going to the bathroom can become hard and painful. That can turn into a cycle of holding it in. Helping the body shift into **BRAKE** is part of breaking that cycle.

02

What a gut stuck on the gas can look like

Constipation	Fewer than three poops a week, hard or painful stools, or holding it in.
Tummy aches	Frequent stomach pain, especially in the morning or before school.
Eating	Very picky eating, low appetite, or reflux.
Mood & sleep	Cranky, anxious, or wired. Restless sleep. The gut and brain talk constantly.
History	Colic or reflux as a baby, rounds of antibiotics, or a hard start.

Constipation can have other causes, and some need medical attention. Please keep your pediatrician in the loop, and call them right away for blood in the stool, vomiting, a swollen belly, weight loss, or fever. What we add is one more question: **how is this child's nervous system regulating?**

03

How a foot gets stuck

We group the stressors that load a nervous system into what we call the Three T's:

Traumas
PHYSICAL

A hard birth, falls, long hours sitting.

Thoughts
EMOTIONAL

Stress, big changes, worry about the bathroom.

Toxins
CHEMICAL

Diet, repeated rounds of antibiotics, environmental exposures.

Often it is several stacked up early: a stressful pregnancy, a hard birth, colic, reflux, and antibiotics for ear infections. We call that the **Perfect Storm**. None of this is anyone's fault. Stress adds up, and a young system can get tuned to stay on alert.

04

Seven ways to help your child’s gut at home

These are not a treatment. They lower the load on a system that is already working hard and help the brake engage.

1. **Make bathroom time calm**
   Sit after meals for 5 minutes, feet on a stool, no rushing and no pressure.
2. **Add water and fiber slowly**
   More water, fruit, veggies, and beans. Go slow so tummies can adjust.
3. **Move every day**
   Running, jumping, and play help the gut move too.
4. **Try a tummy massage**
   Gentle clockwise circles around the belly button for a few minutes.
5. **Breathe low and slow**
   Belly breaths, like blowing up a balloon, help the body shift into BRAKE.
6. **Keep a rhythm**
   Regular meals and bedtime help the body know when to go.
7. **Stay positive**
   Praise trying, not results. Pressure and shame make holding worse.

05

What we actually do

We don’t diagnose or treat constipation or digestive disease.

We measure how the nervous system is regulating. Then we use gentle, specific adjustments to help it shift out of GAS and into BRAKE.

How we measure. An INSiGHT scan is painless and quick. It looks at nervous system patterns along the spine (neurothermal), muscle tension (sEMG), and how flexibly the body shifts between GAS and BRAKE (HRV).

Alongside your team. We work with your pediatrician and GI doctor, not instead of them. Please do not stop any medication without talking to the doctor who prescribed it.

06

Is your child’s foot stuck on the gas?

Does your child…

- ○ Poop fewer than three times a week
- ○ Have hard, painful, or large stools
- ○ Hold it in or avoid the bathroom
- ○ Complain of tummy aches often
- ○ Eat only a few foods or have a low appetite
- ○ Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- ○ Seem anxious, cranky, or wired
- ○ Have a history of colic, reflux, or lots of antibiotics

If you checked more than a few, a scan can show you what is happening underneath.

> *“Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” 3 John 1:2*

Let’s find out what’s going on beneath the surface.

The next step is a New Patient Experience: about an hour with one of our doctors, a full neurological exam, and INSiGHT scans. Kids are always welcome.

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This guide is for education only. It is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat, or cure any condition. Chiropractic care at our practice focuses on nervous system function. Please talk with your child’s pediatrician about any symptom, diagnosis, or medication.