

As I drove in to work and was getting stuck in traffic, I started thinking about being new parents and all the anxieties that come with this new role. Of all the phone calls we get in the pediatrician's office, parents of newborns call most about their babies' bowel movements. That's totally understandable. Babies don't do much. They eat, sleep and poop. They don't talk and can't tell us how they are feeling. Having a bowel movement is one objective way that parents can assess their babies' well-being. The difficulty is telling what a normal bowel movement, and all its normal variations, should look like.

As a general rule-of-thumb, **black**, **white** (not pale yellow) or **red** bowel movements warrant a call to the pediatrician and an evaluation.

As for the rest, I'll discuss and show some pictures of real baby bowel movements. Please don't proceed if you are not in the mood or this is not a good time to be scrolling through pictures of baby poop! I hope this discussion (credit to the Baby Center website) is reassuring and answers some of your questions regarding your baby's bowel movements.

Newborn poop (meconium)

Expect to find a greenish-black, tarry, sticky poop that looks like motor oil in your newborn's diaper. Since meconium is made of amniotic fluid, mucus, skin cells, and other stuff ingested in utero, it doesn't really smell – so you may not realize it's time for a diaper change.



When your baby is 2 to 4 days old, the poop will become lighter in color – sort of a yellowish green – and less sticky. This so-called transitional stool is a sign that he's started digesting early breast milk or formula.

Healthy breastfed poop

If your baby is exclusively breastfed, the poop will be yellow or greenish and have a mushy or creamy consistency. It may be runny enough to resemble diarrhea. Breastfed poop typically looks like Dijon mustard and cottage cheese mixed together and may be dotted with little seed-like flecks. There are many shades of normal when it comes to breastfed poop. One you might see is a greener hue, which could signify that you ate something different than you normally do. If your baby isn't experiencing any other symptoms, there's no need to worry.



If you see bright green and frothy poop in your baby's diaper, almost like algae, she's probably getting too much foremilk – the low-calorie milk that comes first in a feeding – and not enough hindmilk, the higher-fat, super-nutritious stuff. It could mean that you're not feeding her long enough on each breast. To remedy this, start each feeding on the breast you ended on.

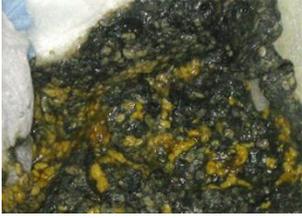
Healthy formula-fed poop

Formula-fed babies have pasty, peanut butter-like poop on the brown color spectrum: tan-brown, yellow-brown, or green-brown. It's more pungent than poop from breastfed babies and a little less pungent than poop from babies who are eating solid food, but you'll recognize the smell.



Iron-fortified poop

If you give your baby an iron supplement, his poop may turn dark green or almost black. This doesn't happen often, but it's a completely normal variation that would make Popeye proud.



Solid-food poop

Once you start changing your baby's input to solid foods – infant cereal, pureed bananas, and so on – you'll almost instantly notice a change in output. Solid-food poop tends to be brown or dark brown and a little thicker than peanut butter, but still mushy. It will also be smellier.



Poop with partially digested food

Occasionally your baby's poop will have identifiable chunks of food in it or be tinged with a surprising hue of the rainbow, like red, orange, or dark blue. Red could mean beets, orange suggests carrots, and dark blue implies blueberries (you may see pieces of blueberry skin in there, too).



Not to worry! You're probably seeing this because certain foods are only partially digestible or travel so quickly through the intestines that they don't have time to completely break down. It also happens when your baby eats a lot of one type of food or doesn't chew a mouthful completely before he swallows.

~Dr. Luu