



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Dehydration: Giving Liquids at Home**

Dehydration means that your child has lost too much fluid and does not have enough electrolytes (salts) in their body for it to work the right way. There are many ways a child can get dehydrated.

- Diarrhea, vomiting, and fever are the main causes in babies.
- Refusing to drink enough due to mouth sores or a bellyache.
- Not drinking enough in hot weather or when exercising.

Babies and younger children are at greater risk of getting dehydrated. It can be very dangerous for them. Your child will need extra liquids given in smaller amounts and more often at home until they are well.

If the liquids are not replaced, they may need to have fluid given directly through a plastic tube into the vein or intravenously (IV) to rehydrate them. Your child does not need that right now.

## **Kinds of Liquids to Give**

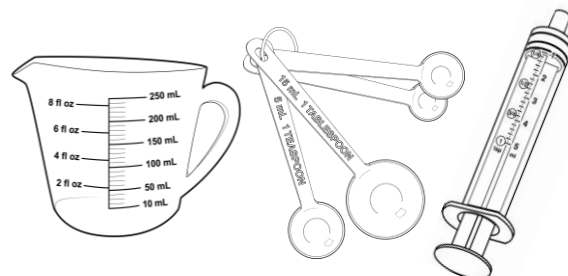
- Your child may need to drink an oral rehydration solution (ORS) like Pedialyte®. An ORS helps replace the electrolytes and fluids that your child needs.
  - You can buy ORSs in liquid or powder form or as popsicles at most pharmacies without a prescription. Store brand ORSs work the same as name brands.
  - Do not water down (dilute) or mix an ORS with formula.
  - Offer your child other things to drink. The ORS should not be the only fluid given to them for more than 6 hours.
  - Do not use sports drinks and home remedies instead of an ORS.
- If your child has diarrhea or vomiting, you may hold back food and milk for 1 or 2 days until they begin to improve. Breastfeeding should not be stopped.

## Liquids for Different Ages

- If your child is **younger than 1 year of age**, give them:
  - An ORS
  - Breast milk or formula mixed the correct way (see instruction on the box) if they can drink it.
  - Do not give these. They could make your child feel worse.
    - Water – unless it's used to make formula
    - Teas or broths
    - Fruit juices or drinks that are high in sugar, such as Hawaiian Punch®, Hi-C®, Kool-Aid®, sodas, or syrups
- If your child is **older than 1 year of age**, give them the same as above, and:
  - Water
  - Popsicles made from an ORS
  - Milk, if it doesn't make them sick
  - Jello®
  - Clear juices like apple, cranberry, or cranapple

## Amount of Liquids

- Start slow. Give small amounts of liquid often.
  - **For children under 1 year of age:** use a spoon or syringe to give 1 to 2 teaspoons (5 to 10 mL) of an ORS, breastmilk, or formula every 5 to 10 minutes.
  - **For older than 1 year of age:** give  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ounce (1 to 2 tablespoons or 15 to 30 mL) every 20 minutes for a few hours. Gradually work up to drinking more.



**Picture 1** Start slow. Measure the amount of liquid your child drinks.

- Measure the amount of liquid your child needs based on their weight. If your child cannot sip from a cup, try to use a teaspoon or a syringe (Picture 1).

Child's Weight	Minimum Goal to Give Every Hour*
7 to 10 lbs.	At least 2 ounces (4 tablespoons or $\frac{1}{4}$ cup)
11 to 15 lbs.	At least $2\frac{1}{2}$ ounces (5 tablespoons)
16 to 20 lbs.	At least $3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces ( $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
21 to 40 lbs.	At least $6\frac{1}{2}$ ounces ( $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
41 to 60 lbs.	At least 10 ounces of liquid every hour ( $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups per hour)

\* Minimum fluid goals per hour may increase if vomiting, diarrhea, or fever are present.

- If your child vomits some, most of the liquid is kept down. Wait for 30 to 60 minutes and try to give small amounts of liquids again.
- Do not force your child to drink or wake them up to drink if they are sleeping.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor or health care provider if they are getting worse, do not get any better in 24 hours, will not breastfeed, or show the following:

Signs of Dehydration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urine is very dark.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Newborn (0 to 4 months of age) has less than 6 wet diapers in a day.</li> <li>– Child (4 months or older) has less than 3 wet diapers in a day or pees less than 3 times in a day.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Dry or sticky mouth.</li> <li>• Hard or fast breathing.</li> <li>• Hard to wake up (lethargic), acts confused, or does not know what they are doing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not pee (urinate).</li> <li>• No tears when crying.</li> <li>• Sunken-looking eyes.</li> <li>• Soft spot on baby's head is flat, sunken, or pulls in.</li> <li>• Abdominal pain (bellyache) that will not go away.</li> </ul>

- Vomit has blood, dark brown specks that look like coffee grounds, or is bright green.
- Vomiting or diarrhea is more severe or happens more often.
- A high fever. Use a digital thermometer and wash it thoroughly after each use.
  - Is **younger than 3 months of age** and has a temperature of 100.4° Fahrenheit (F) or 38°Celsius (C) or higher.
  - Is **older than 3 months** and has a temperature:
    - Of 104°F (40°C) or above.
    - Above 102°F (38.9°C) for more than 2 days or keeps coming back.
    - That has been treated to bring it down, but it has not worked.
  - At **any age**, has a fever and:
    - Looks very ill, is very fussy, or very drowsy.
    - Has a stiff neck, a bad headache, or very sore throat.
    - Has an unusual rash.
    - Has immune system problems that make them more likely to get sick, such as sickle cell disease, cancer, or take medicine that weakens the immune system.