Diarrhea

Diarrhea (loose, watery bowel movements) is a common problem of young children. Diarrhea may be caused by a serious illness, but usually it is only the result of a common viral infection.

The biggest danger of your child having diarrhea is that he can become dehydrated (dee HI dray ted). Dehydrated means that he gets very sick by losing too much fluid and getting “dried out.” Dehydration can usually be prevented by increasing the amount of liquid a child drinks. We have examined your child and think that the diarrhea can be managed at home. You may need to give extra liquids more often, but in smaller amounts while your child is sick. Look below to see how to give him liquids.

Liquids to give

Children younger than 1 year of age
- Pedialyte® or another balanced electrolyte solution such as Infalyte®, Naturalyte®, Rehydralyte®, or KAO Lectrolyte® (powdered rehydration mix). These products are sold at most pharmacies without a prescription.
- Breast milk or formula

Children older than 1 year of age
- Pedialyte® (any flavor)
- Ice popsicles
- Water
- Flavored gelatin cubes

DO NOT give children of any age undiluted fruit juice or Kool-Aid® or soda.
Amount of liquid to give

Give the following amounts of the appropriate liquids based on your child’s weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Weight</th>
<th>Amount of Liquid to Give Every Hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7-10 pounds</td>
<td>2 ounces (4 tablespoons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 pounds</td>
<td>2 ½ ounces (6 tablespoons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 pounds</td>
<td>3 ½ ounces (½ of a large glass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40 pounds</td>
<td>6 ½ ounces (one large glass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60 pounds</td>
<td>10 ounces (1 ½ large glasses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caution

Do not use stool "binders" or anti-diarrhea medicines (like Imodium®) for children, unless your doctor specifically orders it for your child. These medicines can be very dangerous to children if they are not used properly.

Skin care

You may need to change your child’s diapers more often. Diaper rash cream may be used to protect the skin while your child has diarrhea.

Signs of dehydration (Picture 1)

Watch for signs of dehydration while treating your child’s diarrhea. Signs to watch for include:

- Infant's soft spot (fontanelle) on top of his head "sinks in."
- No wet diapers (urine) for 6 to 8 hours or more
- No tears when crying
- Dry or sticky mouth to the touch
- Sunken eyes and dark skin around eyes
- Child is less awake than usual or is hard to wake up.

Picture 1 Signs your child is dehydrated.
Preventing the spread of infection

When diarrhea is caused by a germ that is easily spread (like with a virus), you can help to protect other family members by following these steps:

- Do not share eating utensils. Wash the utensils with hot soapy water before others use them.
- Make sure your child washes his hands with soap after using the toilet and before eating (Picture 2).
- Wash your hands with soap after touching your child, his eating utensils, or his dirty laundry or diapers.
- Wash your child's dirty laundry by itself with hot water.
- Keep toys separate. Wash them with hot, soapy water before others use them.
- Use a clean washcloth or disposable wipes to clean your baby with each diaper change.
- Clean the toilet often.

When to call the doctor

Call the doctor if your child has:

- A temperature of 101°F axillary (under the arm) with diarrhea
- Severe stomach pain (more than occasional cramps)
- Bloody diarrhea (more than a streak of blood)
- Diarrhea that is more frequent or more severe
- Signs of dehydration (above)
- Not feeling better in 48 hours

If you have any questions or concerns, please call your doctor at: _______________