

How to Care for a Child with Diarrhea

Your goals in caring for a child with diarrhea:

- Keep the child from dehydrating
- Keep the child out of the ER
- Prevent other family members from getting diarrhea
- Get child back to a normal diet as soon as possible

Our tips for feeding a child who is having diarrhea:

- Big changes in diet during diarrhea will only prolong the diarrhea. Try to keep feeding the child his regular diet with just the few changes below.
- Do not allow your child to have any juice (apple or other fruit juice, Juicy Juice, punch, etc). It will make the diarrhea worse. Pedialyte and water are fine.
- Milk is also usually okay if your child has diarrhea. Sometimes a child may seem worse after drinking milk. A lactose-free milk (soy milk, Lactaid) may help.
- If your child is on formula, try a lactose-free soy formula (Prosobee, Isomil).
- The traditional BRAT Diet (Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast) has not been shown to shorten the duration of diarrhea, but it is certainly easy to keep down. Try starchy easy to digest foods like these, plus crackers, toast or pasta. Try to stay away from fatty, spicy, and greasy foods (French fries and chicken nuggets).
- Diarrhea can take anywhere from a day to a couple weeks (yes, a couple weeks) to resolve. As long as your child appears well-hydrated and has an appetite, he or she will be fine.

If your child shows signs of dehydration, call our office immediately. These signs are...

- Pale skin, blotchy extremities
- Sunken dry eyes, or a sunken "soft spot" in babies
- Dry lips, dry tongue
- Lack of tears when crying
- Decreased urine output (less than every 5-6 hours), dark urine
- Rapid resting heartbeat and poor energy

Other reasons to call the doctor:

- Blood or mucus in stool
- Severe cramping
- High fevers

Other important information about diarrhea and dehydration:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap to prevent the spread of illness.
- Medicines like Immodium, Keopectate, and Pepto Bismol are not effective and may be dangerous for children with diarrhea. **Do not use them!**
- If diarrhea and vomiting are occurring together, your child is at serious risk for dehydration.
- Your child should not go back to school or daycare until the diarrhea stops.