

How to Manage Your Child's Diarrhea

Diarrhea, or more than three loose or watery stools a day, can cause your child to lose water, salts, vitamins, and minerals and may lead to dehydration. It is important to manage your child's diarrhea. This handout will help you choose the best foods and fluids to offer to your child.

You can use plain water to replace lost fluids if your child is older than 1 year old and can eat regular food.

- If your child weighs less than 40 pounds, offer at least four 8-ounce containers of fluid each day.
- If your child weighs more than 40 pounds, offer four 8-ounce containers of fluid per day plus an extra 8 ounces for every 10 pounds they weigh over 40 pounds.

Offer

- Liquids between meals.
- Smaller amounts of food more often.
- Foods that are easy to digest, such as rice, low-fiber cereal, pasta, breads, crackers, mashed potatoes, cooked carrots, applesauce, and bananas.
- Foods that are warm, not hot. Heat causes food to move faster through the bowels.
- Oral Rehydrating Solutions-such as Pedialyte-to replace fluid, salt and minerals lost in diarrhea. (Adult sport drinks are not made for children.)
- Other sources of liquids in the diet with soups, Jell-O®, sherbet, popsicles, etc.
- Milk if it doesn't make the diarrhea worse. Yogurt, puddings, and ice cream also provide fluid.

Limit

- Greasy foods, fried foods, fatty foods, gravies, and rich or high fat sauces (made with cream, butter, etc.).
- Juices that are high in sorbitol such as apple or pear juice. Drinks that are made with high fructose corn syrup (like soda). Also limit sweet drinks like Kool-Aid® and drinks with caffeine. Too much of these drinks may make symptoms worse.
- Milk and other foods high in lactose, such as ice cream or pudding, if these seem to make the diarrhea worse (or cause other stomach issues like gas or cramping).
- High fiber, whole grain foods, such as whole wheat breads and whole wheat pasta, as these could worsen symptoms.
- Foods that cause gas or cramps: beans, cabbage, broccoli, corn, spicy foods, and drinks that have bubbles (carbonation).

When to Call

Call your child's doctor if:

- Diarrhea lasts longer than 1-2 days or it is getting worse.
- Your child has blood in the stool.
- Your child is passing urine less than 2 times per day or much less than normal.
- Your child's eyes appear sunken or if no tears appear when your child cries.
- Your child has extreme thirst.
- Your child is more tired or fussy than normal.

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below.

You can also visit our website at

www.uwhealth.org/nutrition

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#243