

# Diarrhea Management in Children

Acute diarrhea is an excessive loss of fluid and electrolytes in the stool. It usually has a sudden onset in a healthy child. Diarrhea can be caused by either a virus or bacteria in your child's intestine. Other signs and symptoms that may accompany diarrhea are: fever, abdominal pain, headache, poor appetite, achiness and tiredness.

**When your child has diarrhea it is important to make sure that he/she does not lose too much water. Signs of dehydration are:**

- Dry, sticky mouth
- No tears
- No urine in over 8 hours
- Dark urine

**What you can do:**

1. Maintain and restore hydration. Use an oral electrolyte solution instead of formula for the first 4-6 hours. Pedialyte or Infalyte are good choices. ***It is best not to give:*** fruit juices, Kool-aid, sports drinks, or soda.
2. For formula fed infants, return to full-strength formula as quickly as possible. If the child is unable to tolerate full strength formula, a diluted formula (one fourth to one-half strength) can be used for a short time. The child's regular formula can be used if it is tolerated. You may need a soy formula if diarrhea is severe and does not improve in 3 days. Breastfed infants should breastfeed more frequently for shorter periods.
3. Introduce bland, soft foods within the first 24-48 hours of rehydration. Avoid fatty foods and foods high in sugar. Rice cereals, strained bananas, mashed potatoes, lean meat, yogurt and fruits are well tolerated and assist in firming up the stool.
4. Antidiarrheal medications are not generally recommended.

**Call your health care provider if:**

- Your child has not urinated in 8 hours
- There is blood in the diarrhea
- Your child has had more than 8 bowel movements in the last 8 hours
- The diarrhea is watery and your child throws up clear fluids 3 times or more

**Prevention**

\*Use good handwashing (child and care providers). Liquid soap and paper towels are recommended. Remove soiled clothing and diapers carefully.