



MID-JERSEY PEDIATRICS

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DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is a common childhood illness that usually lasts from three to seven days.. Aside from the nuisance of frequent diaper changes and cleanups, the only real complication of diarrhea is dehydration. Dehydration can have serious medical consequences, but it's relatively easy to prevent by making sure that a child who has diarrhea drinks enough of the right kinds of liquids.

How should diarrhea be treated?

The best choice is an oral rehydration solution such as Pedialyte® or Infalyte®, which you can buy without a prescription at the supermarket or drug store. These solutions contain the water, sugar, and salt that your needs to become rehydrated. Do not substitute plain water for oral rehydration solutions. Drinking nothing but water can be harmful, though children may drink small amounts of water in addition to these solutions. Avoid fluids that contain a lot of sugar such as undiluted fruit juices or fruit punch. These drinks may make the diarrhea worse.

- If your child is bottle fed and less than one year old: Give as much oral rehydrating solution as your child will take. A good rule to follow is to give one ounce every fifteen minutes for the first four to six hours. Use the oral rehydrating solution for no more than one day without consulting a physician. When you restart formula, use a soy-based or lactose free formula. If your child is on solids, stick to starchy foods like rice, applesauce, banana, and toast.
- If your child is breast fed and less than one year old: Give oral rehydrating solution as described above. Continue to nurse and nurse more frequently if possible. If your child is on solids stick to starchy foods like rice, applesauce, banana, and toast.
- If your child is older than one year: Give oral rehydrating solutions if tolerated. Pedialyte® comes in fruit flavors, and as ice pops, that make them more appealing to older children. Other clear fluids such as weak decaffeinated tea, flat soda and Gatorade® may be used as a last resort. These choices are too high in sugar and too low in salt to be used exclusively. Alternate these choices with water and with Pedialyte® if possible. Older children need a little more than four ounces per hour over the first six to eight hours. Starchy foods such as rice, banana, toast, pretzels, potato, plain pasta, and crackers are encouraged. Baked or broiled chicken is a good choice. Avoid fried, fatty foods.

When should I call the doctor?

Call our office if:

- ✓ Your child is vomiting and cannot keep fluids down.
- ✓ Your child is less than 6 months old.
- ✓ Your child has signs of dehydration such as dry mouth; no tears when crying; sunken eyes; urinating less frequently; unusually sleepy or fussy.
- ✓ Your child has severe stomach pain.
- ✓ The diarrhea has blood in it.
- ✓ The diarrhea gets worse.