

# Diarrhea & Vomiting in Children Under 4 yrs Old

## After-Care Instructions

### Treatment for vomiting and diarrhea

- Dehydration, which is the loss of fluid and salt from the body, is the main problem with vomiting and diarrhea. The first goal of treatment is to replace fluids (rehydrate).
- Oral rehydration solution (ORS) is the best liquid to use if a small child is dehydrated. It is available in pharmacies and grocery stores under the brand names of Pedialyte™, Ricelyte™, Infalyte™, or Lytren™. These solutions have the right amount of water, salts, and sugar to replace the losses from diarrhea and vomiting.
- Medicine to stop diarrhea or vomiting might be given to older children, but not to babies. Most children can be treated at home with a change of diet and fluids to prevent dehydration.

### Rehydration for infants (under age 6 months)

- For vomiting and diarrhea give frequent small amounts of fluid. Give one teaspoon of ORS every 2-3 minutes using a small spoon, syringe, or medicine cup.
- Once the vomiting stops, treat the diarrhea with \_\_\_ cup(s) of ORS every hour using a bottle or as indicated above.

- You may continue to breastfeed or use formula, but give the infant ORS between feedings. You do not need to change formula.

### Rehydration for children over age 6 months

- If the child is vomiting, stop feeding him or her for 1-2 hours. Then, give frequent small amounts or sips of formula, breast milk, or ORS.
- For diarrhea, give four to eight ounces of ORS for each large loose stool. You can improve the taste by adding a small pinch of NutraSweet™, sugar-free Kool-Aid™ or Jell-O™ powder. You can alternate ORS with breast milk or formula. Some children will not tolerate cow's milk during a diarrhea illness. Do not give the child full-strength sports drinks, fruit juice, or soda. These have too much sugar that can cause more diarrhea.

### Once your child is hydrated

- When the child has not vomited for several hours and can keep fluids down, you can start feeding him or her again, even if the child is still having diarrhea.
- For children who already eat solid food, start with rice in any form, applesauce,

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**If you think you have a medical or psychiatric emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.**

Emergency services and care are covered if you were experiencing acute symptoms of sufficient severity, including severe pain, such that you reasonably believed that a failure to obtain immediate medical attention could result in serious jeopardy to health, serious impairment to bodily functions, or serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

bananas, yogurt, or crackers. If the child can comfortably eat these foods, next try bread or toast, soup, noodles, cooked cereal, or baked or mashed potatoes (made without milk).

- Finally, add fruits, vegetables (without butter), or baked chicken.
- Avoid milk and other dairy products and foods such as raw fruits, raw vegetables, and bran cereals, until the child's stomach feels normal.
- Avoid giving the child too much to eat and drink all at once. Give the child a lot of small feedings instead of full meals. Have the child drink most of the fluids you are giving him or her in between meals.
- Avoid fried or greasy food.
- If the child is having diarrhea, avoid foods with a lot of natural or added sugar or dairy products. These foods can make diarrhea worse.
- Get the child back on his or her normal diet as soon as the child can tolerate it.

## When to call Kaiser Permanente

- If the diarrhea does not get better after 2-3 days with home treatment.
- If an infant less than age 6 months has been vomiting longer than 8 hours.
- If a child age 6 months to 4 years has been vomiting for more than 12 hours.
- If the child has signs of dehydration, such as urinating less than every 8 hours, crying without tears, or having a dry mouth.
- If the child refuses to drink.

## When to return to an Emergency Department

- If the diarrhea or vomit has blood in it.
- If the child appears seriously ill or will not wake up easily.
- The child appears to be in severe pain and cannot be comforted.

## Other instructions (if needed):

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For information on this and over 180 other health topics, see your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*. If you need a copy, please call 1-800-464-4000.

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