



Feeding the Sick Child

When your child is sick with fever, diarrhea or throwing up, it's important to treat the symptoms quickly to prevent dehydration and get back to a healthy diet as soon as possible.

Your child should get better if given lots of rest, liquids and healthy foods. A child who is throwing up or has diarrhea can lose lots of water and salts from his or her body. If this water and salt is not replaced by drinking the right liquids, your child becomes dehydrated. Dehydration can be life threatening, especially for infants and young children.

Signs of Dehydration

In infants (one week of age or older), look for less than four wet diapers in 24 hours. In young children, watch for less pee and pee that is a deep, yellow colour. Other signs of dehydration include dry, cracked lips and a dry mouth, no tears when crying, sunken eyes, lack of energy levels and seeming very weak or limp.

If your child has any of these signs, go to your family doctor or hospital right away.

If you are breastfeeding, continue to breastfeed. If your baby refuses to breastfeed, see a doctor immediately.

A special liquid called an oral electrolyte maintenance solution (OEMS) helps replace the water and salts, and prevents dehydration. These special drinks have exactly the right amount of water, sugar and salts. These drinks come in different forms and you can buy them in most drug stores. They include:

- Drinks such as Pedialyte.
- Freezies such as Pedia pops.
- A powder that you must mix with water such as Gastrolyte. You must mix this powder exactly as shown on the package.

Using too much or too little water may harm your child.

Sports drinks are not recommended

TIP: Keep a supply of Oral Electrolyte Maintenance Solutions in your home.

If Your Child Has Diarrhea...

If your child has diarrhea continue breastfeeding offering feedings more frequently. For older children, offer age-appropriate foods every three to four hours. Give your child small amounts of food that your child likes. Starchy foods such

as bread, cereals, pasta and rice, and fresh fruits and vegetables are the best foods to give your child when they have diarrhea.

If the diarrhea is severe or you notice signs of dehydration it is important to replace the water and salts lost with an oral electrolyte maintenance solution. It can be given in between feedings as written on the packaging or by a health care professional. **There is no reason to stop feeding your child when he or she has diarrhea.**



Foods NOT to Feed Your Child

fruit juices, soft drinks like ginger ale, sports drinks like Gatorade™.

Ice cream, sherbet or Jell-O.

Sweetened cereals.

Fatty food such as french fries, hamburgers, hot dogs, and butter.

Spicy foods.

Foods to Feed Your Child

Milk. If your baby is breastfeeding, continue to breastfeed.

Starchy foods, such as rice, potatoes, noodles, toast, and crackers.

Cereals such as rice or wheat cereal, and oatmeal.

Boiled or baked meat, fish and chicken, soya, and hard cooked eggs.

Vegetables with no added butter.

Fresh fruit such as bananas or canned fruit packed in juice or water.

Yogurt.

Do not give foods or drinks that have a lot of sugar, fat or caffeine. High-sugar drinks like apple juice, Kool-Aid and soft drinks can make your child's diarrhea worse. Drinks with caffeine like coffee, tea or colas take water out of the body increasing dehydration. High-fat foods take longer to break down and digest, which can irritate the stomach, causing more cramps, bloating and diarrhea. Continue to give your child the OEMS along with food until the diarrhea has stopped.

If Your Child Is Throwing Up...

In young infants, continue breastfeeding your baby smaller amounts more frequently. If baby continues vomiting offer oral electrolyte maintenance solution in between feeds.

In older infants and children continue to feed a normal diet making sure to give lots of fluids. Some foods that might be easier to digest than others include: infant cereals, bread, toast, rice, potatoes, crackers, yogurt, fruit and vegetables. Avoid giving your child sugary foods and drinks or fatty and greasy foods as listed on the page before. You may have to offer smaller amounts of liquids more frequently.

If your child keeps vomiting offer small sips of an oral electrolyte maintenance solution (OEMS). Children can be rehydrated by giving small frequent amounts, even when vomiting. Start with a teaspoon (5 ml) of OEMS every few minutes from a spoon, syringe, or cup. When small sips stay down, slowly increase the amount of liquid you give your child to two tablespoons (30ml) every five minutes. Giving your child too much to drink too soon may cause her or him to continue throwing up.

OEMS are low in calories, protein and other nutrients, and they should not be used alone without other food and drinks for more than 24 hours.

If Your Child Has a Fever...

If your child is being breastfed continue breastfeeding frequently. There is no reason to stop giving your child the milk he or she normally drinks. For older children give lots of clear liquids to drink like water or 100% fruit juice mixed with water. Do not feed your child fatty foods like French fries, hot dogs or butter. A fever decreases the activity of the stomach making fatty foods more difficult to digest.

If Your Child Has a Cold...

Sometimes a child with a cold will not be as hungry. If the child is still being breastfed try feeding baby upright and clear nasal passages before feeding to make it easier to breathe. There is no reason to stop giving your child the milk he or she normally drinks. If your child is eating solids offer smaller servings of healthy foods that your child likes to eat. Offer lots of liquids such as water and milk. Make sure your child gets lots of rest. Choose foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Here are some suggestions:

Grain Products

- Toast.
- Crackers.
- Plain oatmeal.
- Pasta and rice.
- Unsweetened cereal.

Vegetables and Fruit

- Applesauce.
- Bananas.
- Canned fruit packed in water or juice.
- Mashed potatoes.
- Popsicles made from pureed fruit.

Milk Products

- Cheese slices.
- Milk-based pudding.
- Yogurt.

Meat and Alternatives

- Hard-boiled egg.
- Lean beef, pork, chicken or fish.

Combination Dishes

- Homemade chicken noodle soup.
- Homemade vegetable soup.
- Macaroni and cheese.

Know When Your Child Is Not Getting Better...

If your child shows any of the following signs, go to the doctor:

- No pee in eight hours.
- Dry mouth.
- Sunken eyes.
- Extreme thirst.
- No tears when crying.
- Unusually drowsy or fussy.

Go to your family doctor or the hospital if your child:

- Is throwing up for longer than 24 hours.
- Will not drink and diarrhea lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Has a high fever, severe headache or stomach ache.
- Is drinking, but diarrhea lasts longer than seven days.
- Is throwing up blood or has bloody diarrhea.

Adapted from the County of Lambton's Community Health Services Department's "Feeding the Sick Child - Fact Sheet"

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