



Diarrhea: Do's and Don'ts

What Not to Do

- Don't worry too much. If given adequate and appropriate fluids, most children can easily handle up to a dozen loose stools in a day without getting dehydrated.
- Don't give milk (or lactose containing formula). Don't give apple juice either. That will make matters worse!
- Don't give Imodium. An exception might be made for children over age 2 with mild or longstanding diarrhea.

What You Can Do

- Give infants and small children cold, flat Gingerale, Seven-Up, Sierra Mist, or other Lemon-Lime soda, or Pedialyte (or equivalent store-brand solutions). Flavored kinds are okay. Older kids may prefer Gatorade. Water, ginger ale, weak tea, soup, and Jello are okay for older children (over 4 years old) that won't take Pedialyte.
- Lactose-free or soy-based milk (or formula for infants) may be given as soon as the diarrhea has slowed a bit. Feel free to check with us on this.
- What should your child eat? For infants, rice and bananas and toast and fresh apple (not apple sauce or apple juice) are probably the best solids to focus on. Older children may eat a regular diet, if they are not vomiting. If some undigested food appears in the stools, this is not a cause for concern.
- Pepto-Bismal or Kaopectate (they both now contain the same thing --pink bismuth) may be considered for children age 6 and up.
- Acidophilus -- the friendly bacteria found in yogurt -- can help at any age, especially if the diarrhea develops during antibiotic treatment. For small children, open the capsule and sprinkle it into applesauce. Lactobacillus GG and Probiotica are some common name brands, but generics are available too.
- Zinc may help in children over six months of age. The dose is 10 to 20 mg per day.

When to Call

- Let us know if a fever over 102 develops, the diarrhea contains blood, or lots of mucus or the stools smell like rotten eggs. These could be a sign of food poisoning or more serious germs
- Call if signs of dehydration appear -- dry diapers in babies for more than 8 hours; absence of tears when the child cries; "too weak to walk" is concerning in older children. ••

Vomiting combined with diarrhea can bring these symptoms on faster so be sure to treat the vomiting first!.