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## Health Issues

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### Diarrhea

## What is the best way to treat diarrhea?

Most children with mild diarrhea can continue to eat a normal diet including formula or milk. Breastfeeding can continue. If your baby seems bloated or gassy after drinking cow's milk or formula, call your pediatrician to discuss a temporary change in diet. Special fluids for mild illness are not usually necessary.

### Special fluids for moderate illness

Children with moderate diarrhea may need special fluids. These fluids, called electrolyte solutions, have been designed to replace water and salts lost during diarrhea. They are extremely helpful for the home management of mild to moderately severe illness. Do not try to prepare these special fluids yourself. Use only commercially available fluids—brand-name and generic brands are equally effective. Your pediatrician or pharmacist can tell you what products are available.

If your child is not vomiting, these fluids can be used in very generous amounts until the child starts making normal amounts of urine again.

### Reminder—Do's and Don'ts

#### Do

- Watch for signs of dehydration which occur when a child loses too much fluid and becomes dried out. Symptoms of dehydration include a decrease in urination, no tears when baby cries, high fever, dry mouth, weight loss, extreme thirst, listlessness, and sunken eyes.
- Keep your pediatrician informed if there is any significant change in how your child is behaving.
- Report if your child has blood in his stool.
- Report if your child develops a high fever (more than 102°F or 39°C).
- Continue to feed your child if she is not vomiting. You may have to give your child smaller amounts of food than normal or give your child foods that do not further upset his or her stomach.
- Use diarrhea replacement fluids that are specifically made for diarrhea if your child is thirsty.

#### Don't

- Try to make special salt and fluid combinations at home unless your pediatrician instructs you and you have the proper instruments.
- Prevent the child from eating if she is hungry.
- Use boiled milk or other salty broth and soups.
- Use "anti-diarrhea" medicines unless prescribed by your pediatrician.

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**Source** Diarrhea and Dehydration (Copyright © 1996 American Academy of Pediatrics, Updated 7/04)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.