

HUNTINGTON PLAZA PEDIATRIC GROUP

DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is defined as the sudden increase in watery stools. It is usually caused by a viral infection of the intestines called gastroenteritis. Diarrhea may be present with a combination of symptoms that include vomiting, fever, and generalized abdominal cramping. Diarrhea may last from several days to a week and may be most severe in the first 24-48 hours. Treatment is focused on supportive care and adequate hydration.

Remember breastfed babies normally have frequent loose stools. Change in color or odor may be normal. It is not diarrhea unless it contains blood, abruptly increases in number, or has no substance – is all water.

Treatment:

Breast fed infants:

- Provide breast milk on demand, this should be more frequently than usual.
- Offer Pedialyte between feedings if your baby is not breastfeeding as well as usual.
- If your baby has already started solids, try rice cereal, strained bananas, mashed potatoes.

Formula Fed infants:

- Give him/her fluids more often than you would normally and as much as s/he wants. Fluids prevent dehydration.
- Offer oral rehydration solutions (Pedialyte) instead of formula for at least 4-6 hours (up to 24 hours). After this, you should resume the baby's formula. You may need soy formula or lactose-free formula if the diarrhea is severe or doesn't improve after 3 days (please call your pediatrician to discuss this).
- If your baby has already started solids, try rice cereal, strained bananas, mashed potatoes.

Older children:

- Avoid fruit juices because they may exacerbate the loose stools.
- Avoid milk and dairy products for 24 hours (longer if severe diarrhea, but please call your doctor to discuss this).
- Continue with clear liquids such as Pedialyte, Gatorade, broths or chamomile tea.
- If your child feels like eating, start with the BRAT diet. This includes Bread, Rice, Applesauce, & Toast.
- It is OK if your child does not eat well as long as they are staying well hydrated.

Call our office if:

- No urine for over 8 hours
- Dark urine
- Dry, sticky mouth
- Any blood in the stool
- Fever for more than 72 hours
- Localized abdominal pain
- Your child is acting sick