

## Common Childhood Problems

(1 – 5 years)

# Diarrhea

### \* What is diarrhea?

Your child has diarrhea when he has three or more watery stools (bowel movements) in one day or when his stools become more frequent than usual. It is important to treat the cause of the diarrhea first. Diarrhea can be harmful if it is not treated quickly because a child may lose too much fluid, this can cause dehydration.

### \* If my child has diarrhea, what should I do?

If your child has any of the following problems, call your doctor or clinic **NOW**:

- Decrease in urination
- Extreme thirst
- Weight loss
- Seems cold, without energy, limp — or will not wake up
- Dry, sunken eyes or dry mouth or tongue
- Black or bloody stools
- Refuses to eat or drink
- More than three watery stools in one day
- Diarrhea that lasts more than one day
- A fever above 99° F



### \* Mild to moderate diarrhea

- In most cases of mild diarrhea, children can keep eating a normal diet including milk. If your child is bloated after drinking milk, your doctor may suggest a short term change to your child's diet.
- You can help prevent dehydration by giving more fluids. Ask your doctor about extra fluids and electrolyte solutions such as Pedialyte for your child.
- If you are still breastfeeding, continue to nurse your child. Infants and children fed breastmilk can be nursed safely even when they have diarrhea.
- If your child wants food, continue to feed him a healthy diet. Give more complex

(continued on other side)

## Mild to moderate diarrhea

(continued from other side)

carbohydrates (rice, wheat, potatoes), yogurt with live active cultures, and meats.

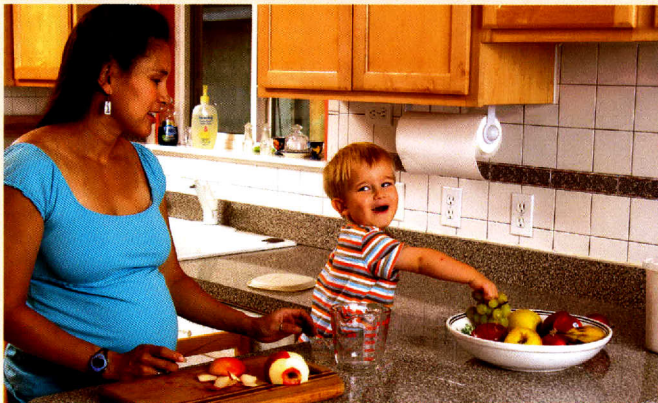
- Do not give:
  - Simple sugars, such as juices, soft drinks, and sports drinks
  - High fiber and gas-producing foods such as nuts, beans, corn, broccoli, cauliflower, or cabbage
  - Fatty foods
- Do not force your child to eat.
- Do not withhold food for more than 24 hours. Do not feed only bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast (“BRAT” diet) – these can decrease the calories and nutrients your child gets.



## \* How can I prevent diarrhea?

### Practice good food safety

- Wash your hands and your child’s hands with soap and water:
  - Before preparing and eating meals.
  - Before feeding your child.
- After using the toilet, changing diapers, or sneezing or coughing into your hands.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Put foods that will spoil into your refrigerator right after you use them.
- Cook hamburger meat until well done (juices run clear and meat is brown inside).
- Do not give your child:
  - Raw milk or juice that has not been pasteurized.
  - More than 4 ounces of juice a day.
  - Food from your mouth, fork, or spoon.



For more information on treating diarrhea, visit Kids Health [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) or the American Academy of Pediatrics [www.aap.org/topics.html](http://www.aap.org/topics.html).



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