

# Common Infant Problems

(Birth – 1 year)

# Diarrhea

## \* What is diarrhea?

Your baby has diarrhea when he has three or more watery stools (bowel movements) in one day or when his stools become more frequent and watery 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 baby may lose too much fluid, this can cause dehydration.

## \* If my baby begins to have diarrhea, what should I do?

- Continue with breastfeeding or formula feeding to help slow down the amount and how often a baby has a stool.
- Do not switch infant formulas unless your doctor says you should.
- Do not add extra water to dilute infant formula.
- Infants fed solid foods can continue to eat their usual foods, but give more complex carbohydrates (rice, wheat, potatoes) and meats.
- Do not give juices, soft drinks, and sport drinks since these have simple sugars which can make the problem worse.
- Do not withhold food for more than 24 hours. Do not feed the “BRAT” diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast) alone — these can decrease calorie and nutrient intake.



## If my baby has severe diarrhea or dehydration, what should I do?

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

- Seems cold, without energy, limp — or will not wake up.
- Dry, sunken eyes, dry mouth or tongue, or cries without tears.
- Blood, mucus, or pus in the diaper or stool, or black stools after 4 days of age.

(continued on other side)

# If my baby has severe diarrhea or dehydration, what should I do?

(continued from other side)

- Vomiting or weight loss.
- Dark, yellow urine in the diaper or no urine for over 6 hours.
- Refuses to breastfeed or take a bottle.
- More than three watery stools in one day or diarrhea that lasts more than one day.
- A fever above 99°F.

Ask your doctor about giving fluids and electrolyte solutions such as Pedialyte to your baby. Electrolyte solutions should be given to infants only under the supervision of a doctor. Do not give medicine to your baby unless your doctor tells you to.



## What can I do to help prevent diarrhea?

- Wash your hands with soap and water:
  - Before making your baby's food or bottles.
  - Before feeding your baby.
  - After using the toilet, changing diapers, sneezing, or coughing into your hands.
- Wash your baby's hands often and clean under his fingernails with soap and water.
- Regularly wash any toys or things your baby puts into her mouth.
- Breastfeed your baby.
- Boil bottles and equipment for breastmilk or formula.
- For babies 3 months and younger, boil water used for making formula.
- Throw away breastmilk or formula left in the bottle after each feeding.
- Keep prepared or open cans of formula in the refrigerator. Throw them away after two days.
- Never feed right out of a jar of baby food. Always use a clean spoon to take the baby food from the jar and put it on a dish. When your baby is done eating, throw away any baby food left on the dish.
- Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Refrigerate foods after you use them.
- Do not give your baby:
  - Raw milk or juice that has not been pasteurized.
  - More than 4 ounces of fruit juice a day. If your baby is less than 6 months old, do not give any juice.
  - 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).