



PREMIER MEDICAL ASSOCIATES

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is defined as frequent, loose stools. It can range from 2-3 mushy stools per day to more than six watery stools per day. Frequency or how often the child is going is the best indicator of how bad the diarrhea is. One loose stool a day is not considered diarrhea.

Diarrhea is usually caused by a viral infection of the intestines (gastroenteritis). Occasionally, it can be caused by bacteria or a parasite. It can also be due to excessive fruit juice or a food allergy.

If only one or two loose stools are passed, the cause is probably something your child ate.

The main complication of diarrhea is dehydration from losing too many fluids.

Symptoms include:

- Dry lips
- No tears
- Lethargy
- Decreased urine output (no urine for 8 hours)

If your child has any of these symptoms you need to call our office immediately.

Diarrhea can last for several days up to a week or more. For diarrhea caused by a virus, the main treatment is keeping your child hydrated with oral fluids (drinks).

Dietary management

For children under one year of age:

- Offer electrolyte solutions between feeds, such as Pedialyte or Kaolectrolyte, which can be bought in most grocery stores or pharmacies.

- Avoid fruit juices and “P” fruits, such as, pears, plums and prunes, because these will make the stools loose.
- Offer the same solid foods you would normally. If the child is on table foods, avoid fatty or spicy foods.
- Sometimes switching the child’s formula to a soy-based product for 1-2 weeks can be helpful.
- Breastfed babies normally have loose to watery stools. This is normal unless they contain blood or mucus. Changes in the mother’s diet can affect a baby’s stool, also. For example, caffeine can cause and increase in stooling with breastfed infants. Diarrhea is therefore defined as an abrupt increase in the number of stools. Treatment consists of breastfeeding as normal and offering electrolyte solutions between feeds. Mom should also watch her diet and eliminate foods as you would for an older child with diarrhea.

For children over one year of age:

- Offer plenty of fluids, including electrolyte solutions, such as, Pedialyte or Kaolectrolyte. Pedialyte popsicles are popular with toddlers. Sports drinks, such as Gatorade or All-Sport, may also be given to older children.
- Eliminate milk products for 1-2 days. Many viruses can cause temporary lactose intolerance. The exception is yogurt, which can be given, but should contain “live active cultures”. This helps replace some of the organisms in the intestines that diarrhea eliminates.
- Increase the child’s intake of starches such as bread, crackers, rice, potatoes and pasta.
- Avoid heavy fats, such as gravy or cream sauces and spices.
- Bananas and Applesauce will also help form the stool.
- Resume normal diet when diarrhea is gone for a day or two.

Note: Diarrhea is very contagious and good hand washing is very important for all family members to decrease the risk of spreading it.

Call us immediately if:

- No urine output for 8 hours
- No tears, with crying.
- Blood in the stool repeatedly.
- Severe stomach cramps- note, however, that diarrhea will cause cramping, but it usually comes in waves with periods of relief after the bowel movement passes.
- Severe diarrhea (a bowel movement every hour for more than eight hours)
- The child becomes dizzy while standing

- The child is acting very sick.

Note: If your child is vomiting also, treat the vomiting first before treating the diarrhea. After your child has gone eight hours without vomiting, you can begin to treat the diarrhea.

Patient Information

Medical Disclaimer

Premier Medical Associates PC offers the information on this Web site for general educational purposes only. This information should not be used for diagnosis, nor should it be considered a replacement for consultation with a healthcare professional. If you have questions or concerns about your health or the health of your child or dependant, please contact your healthcare provider immediately.