



## Preventing and treating dehydration

Dehydration can happen when fluid intake is less than the amount being lost. Children lose fluids more easily than adults, which can occur when a child has a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting. When a child is ill, they may refuse to drink, or drink less than needed. Signs of dehydration can include: thirst or dry, sticky mouth; more fussy or sleepier than normal; less urine (fewer than six wet diapers a day in babies); dark, strong-smelling urine; sunken eyes or crying without tears; change in behavior; and dizziness.

When your child is sick, watch for signs of dehydration. If you see signs, take steps to increase fluids. If your child can't keep fluids down or doesn't get better, call your child's health care provider right away. The provider may prescribe medication for vomiting. Don't give your child aspirin or any other medication without talking to your provider.

**For a baby or toddler with diarrhea or vomiting:**

Breastfeed or bottle-feed as often as possible. Breastfed babies are less likely to develop severe diarrhea and can often get enough fluids with breastfeeding alone. Ask your provider if you need to use an oral rehydration solution (ORS), available OTC at groceries and pharmacies. Your child can be rehydrated by frequently drinking small amounts of fluid over three to four hours. Ask your provider about the right amount and type of fluid to give. (e.g.: 1 tsp. fluid per pound of body weight every five minutes until you reach the goal amount.) Stop all feedings during this period. If your child vomits, wait 30 minutes and resume until total amount is given. Watch carefully for any signs of dehydration.

**For an older child with diarrhea or vomiting:**

Give fluids as often as child is able to drink them, including water, ice chips, ginger ale, broth, or ice pops. Slowly increase the amounts as child is able to keep them down. Give an over-the-counter ORS, if advised by your provider. Have child drink 1 ounce of fluid every 20 minutes to rehydrate. Watch carefully for signs of dehydration.

**Call your child's health care provider right away if any of these occur:** fever/chills/can't keep fluids down (continued vomiting); listlessness or lack of response; no urine in eight hours, or only small amounts of dark urine; belly (abdominal) pain or headache that gets worse; crying that can't be soothed (babies); bloody diarrhea/refuses to eat/new rash; yellowing of the eyes (jaundice); vomiting of green or blood-colored material.

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