

MATTHEW S. COHEN, MD FAAP  
PATIENT INSTRUCTION SHEET

**DIARRHEA & VOMITING**

Diarrhea and vomiting are often the result of a viral infection. **There is no medicine which will cure a gastrointestinal virus**, but the virus will go away on its own. However, there are certain steps that can be taken to prevent your child from becoming dehydrated from the vomiting and diarrhea. Dehydration (and therefore, electrolyte imbalance) is the primary concern with vomiting and diarrhea illnesses. It is important to first assess your child for signs of dehydration.

**SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION:**

1. Decreased urine output
2. Child is crying without tears
3. Sunken fontanelle (depressed soft spot on an infant's head)
4. Dry mucus membranes (oral)
5. Decreased skin turgor
6. Poor capillary refill (poor circulation at finger tips and toes)

**FOR VOMITING:**

Feed your child **small** amounts of clear fluids with a teaspoon, tablespoon, or syringe, every 10 or 15 minutes for a period of 2-3 hours. Then provide your child with a period of 30 minutes to 1 hour to ensure toleration of the fluids. Then resume the process of rehydrating your child. You can use Pedialyte, apple juice, white grape juice, Coca-Cola, ginger-ale, weak tea, **NOT MILK, FORMULA, OR ORANGE JUICE**. You do not want too much in the child's stomach at one time or he/she will vomit. It is important to remember to provide small amounts more frequently, as large volumes of fluids will result in vomiting.

**FOR DIARRHEA:**

If your child has diarrhea only and is not vomiting, you can feed him/her clear fluids (except apple juice, prune juice, and pear juice) and foods such as toast, crackers, noodles, boiled potatoes, white rice or rice cereal, bananas, apple sauce (BRAT diet), and plain white meat chicken. White grape juice is an excellent choice in the treatment of diarrhea, and is the only recommended juice in the treatment of diarrhea.

**FOR BOTH VOMITING AND DIARRHEA:**

Follow instructions of **VOMITING**.

Usually a child needs to drink only clear fluids for 12-24 hours. When the vomiting has stopped, you can add the foods listed above. Any exceptions to this will be specified by the doctor. If your child tolerates mild foods, you may increase the diet slowly but stay away from dairy products and fried or green leafy foods for 2-3 days.

If your child is not improving and cannot take the fluids for any reason (too weak, too sleepy, vomiting too much) come to the office immediately. If you have any questions, call.