

Oral Rehydration Therapy

Jeffrey Greenberg, M.D., F.A.A.P.

These are instructions to be used when your child is ill and is not taking sufficient fluids. This is especially useful when your child has the stomach flu or any other illness in which he/she won't drink.

How do you know if he/she is not taking enough? Look to see if:

- There is a decrease in urine output
- There are no tears with crying
- The front soft spot is really sunken
- The eyes look glassy and deep set

If any of the above is the case, than implementing the following instructions will be helpful in keeping your child well hydrated and hopefully out of the emergency room.

1. Slow and steady is the name of the game, regardless of the age of the child. This means giving the equivalent of 5 mL or cc's (1 teaspoon) every five minutes or any multiple of this as instructed.
 - a. 10 cc every 10 minutes (2 teaspoons)
 - b. 15 cc every 15 minutes (3 teaspoons or 1/2 of a shot glass)
 - c. 30 cc every 30 minutes (6 teaspoons or one shot glass)
 - d. Etc.
 - e. Increase the amount and frequency every 2-3 hours as tolerated
2. What fluids should I use?
 - a. For infants and children < 2 years use Pedialyte (Grape is the best tasting)
 - b. For children over 2 years, Gatorade (not Powerade) is preferable. Popsicles are also good.
 - c. Milk, acidic drinks and juices should be avoided especially with vomiting and diarrhea
3. What if they refuse to drink?
 - a. You have 2 choices-
 - i. Go the ER for an IV and fluids OR...
 - ii. Give the fluids bit by bit with a syringe, play games with the shot glasses and drink with them. This is not easy and is time consuming but works well with diligence.
4. Can they eat?
 - a. NO! A child can go 1 or 2 days without eating
 - b. Don't give into to their fussing for more fluids or food. This will only compound the problem.
 - c. You can slowly advance their diet with bland foods if they have tolerated the fluids for at least 18-24 hours
5. Finally, if you are concerned about the hydration status of your child please call the doctor on call or go to the nearest emergency department.