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PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

ACUTE DIARRHEA

DEFINITION/EXPLANATION:

Diarrhea is loose, watery bowel movements. Usually, it is a minor problem; but may be serious times. The best prevention is careful hand washing. A major problem in having diarrhea is dehydration (drying out). This can occur when your child loses too much fluid. Dehydration can be prevented by increasing the amount of liquid the child drinks.

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION:

- Child is less active than normal.
- Child's eyes are sunken.
- Child's mouth becomes dry and sticky.
- There are no tears when the child cries.
- Child has not urinated (passed water) for six hours.
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HOW TO GIVE LIQUIDS:

Give liquids in small amounts frequently. For example, give 1 or 2 ounces every half hour. If the child takes this well, increase the amount a little every half hour. If your child vomits, decrease the amount of liquids. Offer only sips of liquid every half hour and increase slowly.

Liquids to be Given: (Oral Rehydration Fluid: **ORF**)

- Infalyte
- Pedialyte
- KaoLectrolyte

Give small amounts (for example, 1 ounce) of Oral Rehydration Fluid every 1/2 to 1 hour for 4 to 6 hours then slowly begin regular diet (see steps 1 and 2 below). **NEVER ADD WATER TO DILUTE Oral Rehydration Fluid.** Note: Bowel movements will remain loose when normal diet is first started. They should return to normal in 3-4 days.

Step 1 -- INFANTS

Breastfeeding may be started immediately. Infants not breastfeeding may have 1/2 strength formula (1/2 water + 1/2 full strength formula) for the first one or two feedings following Oral Rehydration Fluid, then return to the normal feeding. No more than one to two feedings, should be 1/2 strength formula. **DO NOT USE Oral Rehydration Fluids TO DILUTE FORMULA.**

If diarrhea continues, offer 2-3 ounces of Oral Rehydration Fluid after each loose stool.

Continue feedings toward normal diet.

Step 2 -- CHILDREN

Slowly advance the diet to a regular diet. Greasy foods and foods high in sugar should be added slowly since they may increase diarrhea. If your child will not drink Oral Rehydration Fluid, offer a variety of other fluids such as diluted fruit juices, non diet soda, caffeine free tea, popsicles, water, and broths.

Foods well tolerated:

- ✓ Rice cereal for infants, rice for older children
- ✓ Plain crackers
- ✓ Chicken
- ✓ Pasta (Noodles)

- ✓ Potatoes
- ✓ Bananas
- ✓ Apple Sauce

Foods to Avoid until Diarrhea Improves:

- ✓ Apple juice
- ✓ Other undiluted juices
- ✓ Kool-aid
- ✓ Fried Foods
- ✓ Dairy Products
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WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR or NURSE CARE LINE:

- If the child suddenly develops a very high fever.
- If the stomach pain becomes severe.
- If the diarrhea is bloody.
- If the child becomes dehydrated (dried out).
- If the diarrhea continues for two days.

WARNING: DO NOT USE ANTIDIARRHEA MEDICINES FOR YOUR CHILD UNLESS DIRECTED BY YOUR DOCTOR. THESE MEDICATIONS CAN BE DANGEROUS IF THEY ARE USED INCORRECTLY.

FOR PROTECTION OF OTHERS:

Diarrhea is easily spread to other people or family members. Some things you can do at home to prevent the spread of diarrhea are:

Encourage everyone in the family to wash their hands with soap and water:

- ✓ after using the bathroom.
- ✓ after handling diapers.
- ✓ before handling or preparing food or drink.

Place all soiled diapers in a covered container, away from children and animals. Diaper containers should be lined with a plastic bag and emptied daily. If plastic bags are unavailable diaper containers should be emptied and washed daily with soapy water. Diapering should be done in an area away from where food is being prepared or eaten. The best place to change a diaper is in the bedroom or bathroom.

Clean your bathroom daily. Suggested cleaning method: The sink, faucets, and toilet seat should be cleaned daily with a solution of Clorox or Lysol. Follow the directions for household cleaning on the bottle.

REMEMBER: WHENEVER YOU USE ANY CLEANING PRODUCT, KEEP IT OUT OF THE REACH OF YOUR CHILDREN.

If your child attends day care, you will need to know their rules about when your child will be allowed to go back. It is best to call ahead to be sure your child is able to return.

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