

First aid: When your kids have diarrhea

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QHello Doc! The holidays are here again and I'm afraid my kids might get some sort of diarrhea again from all the parties that we're scheduled to attend. What do I need to do as first aid treatment for diarrhea? When do I bring my child to the hospital? --Concerned Dad



AHello Concerned Dad! Diarrhea or Acute Gastroenteritis is a very common disease especially during the holiday season. Having endless Christmas parties and reunions also mean infinite exposure to people with viruses or spoiled food due to improper storage. Symptoms include watery or loose stools (brownish or greenish in color) with or without blood streaks, on and off abdominal cramping, vomiting of previously ingested food, headache, and low-grade fever. Diarrhea in children should be taken very seriously and should be treated ASAP because dehydration occurs rapidly in infants and children. Here are the first few steps you can do as “first-aid treatment” for diarrhea:

1. Give Oral Rehydration Solution:

These may be found as a ready-to-drink liquid preparation or a sachet preparation to be mixed with water. Find one with a flavor that suits your child's taste and serve chilled. For infants up to 2 years old, give 50-100ml after each episode of watery stools. For those 2 years old and above, you may give 100-200ml after each episode of loose watery stools. For bigger children and adolescents, give as much as they can take. Personally, a natural alternative best for hydration is coconut water or our very own buko juice. It is high in sodium and also has potassium to re-

plenish the body stores. For infants less than 6 months who are on pure milk feedings, you can just continue breastfeeding and giving milk with the same volume as above.

2. Give Probiotics:

Probiotics are good bacteria that are needed to improve our gut microflora. Giving some probiotics during the duration of the diarrheal episode may help rebuild the microbiome of the gut after a virus or a bacteria has infected it. These may come in granules or in liquid form.

Zinc Sulfate is a mineral that is very helpful in building the epithelium lining of our intestinal tract. Studies have shown that giving zinc may decrease the chances of having another diarrheal episode in the future.

3. Give Zinc Sulfate: 4. Foods to avoid:

It is best to avoid foods which are too spicy, too oily and those chunky foods that are hard to digest because our gut and intestines are still healing. Foods such as pears, prunes and dairy products must be avoided as it may promote loose bowel movement. We can start with soft foods such as soups, arroz caldo or congee paired with some crackers. We can also add some fiber like apples and bananas to increase stool bulk.

If your child looks and feels weak, has poor appetite, has dry lips and tongue, and has a urine color that is darker than usual, he or she might be already dehydrated. This warrants a trip to the hospital for possible hydration therapy and supportive care.

Dr. Celeste Gomez, M.D. , DPPS is a Visiting Consultant in The Medical City and an Active Consultant in Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center. A graduate of the University of the Philippines, College of Medicine, she is currently a Diplomate of the Philippine Pediatric Society. As a member of the IFM with a medical background, Dr. Celeste balances conventional medicine with appropriate and in-depth personal nutritional and lifestyle advice. She enjoys regular tennis sessions, swimming, and windsurfing.