



# NOURISHING A SICK CHILD

**N**ourishing a sick child may be a challenge. Loss of appetite typically accompanies fever and the aches and pains of feeling bad. The flu or a bad cold may make a child less active, requiring fewer calories. But fever increases the heart rate and breathing, causing caloric needs to increase.

For short illnesses, the best plan is to make sure your child drinks plenty of liquids. If a child rejects food for a day don't panic. But if she rejects all liquids as well, call your pediatrician. Infants shouldn't go any longer than 8-10 hours without liquid before calling your pediatrician.

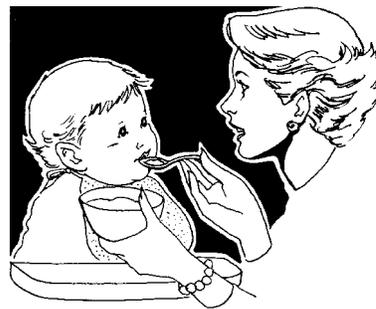
Signs of dehydration include: diminished urine flow; darkened urine; fewer tears when crying; lethargy; a parched, dry mouth; or, in infants a sunken soft spot on top of the head.

To prevent dehydration, infants under age one need **at least** one to two ounces of fluid per hour; kids over one, need **at least** three to four ounces of fluid per hour. Your doctor may recommend a commercial oral rehydration solution available in most grocery and drug stores. These solutions have the optimal

concentration of sugar and electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium. If a child is vomiting or has diarrhea, they will need more fluids to replace what has been lost.

Your child's symptoms and age will determine the kind of fluids and food they may tolerate. Higher-sugar beverages, such as juice, soft drinks, sports drinks, or diluted gelatin, are ineffective and may actually worsen diarrhea in children.

Don't force-feed a child if they



temporarily lose interest in food. Instead, offer small frequent snacks. Simple solids, such as bananas, applesauce, crackers, dry

toast, and flavored gelatin, tend to be well accepted. Unsweetened cereals and their favorite fruit or vegetable may also be good choices.

Once your child shows signs of recovery, slowly begin solid foods and other liquids. There is no need to totally rest the gut, as was once practiced. Studies show that early refeeding with milk or food, may even reduce the duration of diarrhea.

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Symptom	Foods	Fluids	Avoid
<b>Nausea or vomiting</b>	Once your child can keep fluids down, give small servings such as toast, gelatin, applesauce and soup with rice or noodles.	Encourage frequent sips of water, diluted juice or rehydration solutions.	Drinking too much at once may trigger vomiting. Dairy products and fried foods may aggravate nausea.
<b>Sore throat or cough</b>	Cool, soft foods, such as pudding, gelatin and fruit smoothies are soothing to the throat.	For painful swallowing, a child over 2 may suck on ice chips or popsicles. Warm tea with honey is also soothing.	Citrus and salt may irritate the throat. Dairy products may aggravate a swollen throat or increase congestion.
<b>Fever</b>	Bland foods like oatmeal, mashed potatoes, and pudding, may appeal to a feverish child.	Encourage your child to drink cool water, diluted juices, and/or rehydration fluids.	Frozen foods may aggravate fever-related chills.
<b>Congestion</b>	Chicken soup may temporarily reduce nasal and throat inflammation.	Warm lemonade, apple juice or other liquids may help to dilute mucus.	Dairy products may increase congestion.
<b>Diarrhea</b>	Small amounts of food help the body absorb water.	Replenish lost fluids. Encourage small sips frequently.	Salty or sugary foods, or dairy products, may be hard to digest. Undiluted juices, fruit, and fried foods may worsen diarrhea.

### References

1. Feeding Kids Newsletter. Ohio State University, 1998.
2. Food & Healing. Annemarie Colbin, 1996.
3. The New Mom's Guide to Treating Kid's Illness. Tylenol & The American Academy of Family Physicians, 1999.

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