

Additional Rehydration Information

It is important to rehydrate with solutions that contain electrolytes, especially sodium and potassium, so that electrolyte disturbances may be avoided. Sugar is important to improve absorption of electrolytes and water, but if too much sugar is present in the rehydration solution, diarrhea can be worsened. Zinc supplements reduce the duration of a diarrhea episode by 25% and are associated with a 30% reduction in stool volume. Oral rehydration does not stop diarrhea, but keeps the body hydrated until the diarrhea passes.

Optional Rehydration Recipe

Combine:

- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda (bicarbonate of soda)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt substitute (potassium chloride) or 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 8 teaspoons raw, brown or white sugar.

You may add 1/2 teaspoon of dry ginger to help settle the stomach.

This makes enough for one quart (liter) of water. Mix the salts and sugar well and add water. Make up several packets at once and you will be prepared for flu or any other dehydration situation.

Other Good Rehydration Options

- Salted rice or barley water
- Gruels (diluted mixtures of cooked cereals and water)
- Vegetable or chicken soup with salt
- Unsweetened fruit juice (with a small amount of salt)
- Pedialyte or Endura rehydration products (or other similar commercial products)

Drinks to Avoid

Avoid soft drinks, sweetened fruit drinks, sweetened tea or coffee. Sports drinks (such as Gatorade) have too much sugar and not enough electrolytes. Drinks with a high concentration of sugar can worsen diarrhea as they draw water out of the body and into the intestine.

Oral Rehydration and Vomiting

Adults and children with dehydration who are not vomiting can be allowed to drink these solutions in addition to their normal diet. People who are vomiting should be fed small frequent amounts of rehydrating solution until dehydration is resolved. Once they are rehydrated, they may resume eating normal foods when nausea passes.

Vomiting itself does not mean that oral rehydration cannot be given. As long as more fluid enters than exits, rehydration will be accomplished. It is only when the volume of fluid and electrolyte loss in vomit and stool exceeds what is taken in that dehydration will continue. When vomiting occurs, rest the stomach for ten minutes and then offer small amounts of an oral rehydration solution. Start with a teaspoonful every five minutes in children and a tablespoonful every five minutes in older children and adults.