Diet for Diarrhea, Infants and Children

Having frequent, runny stools (*diarrhea*) has many causes. Diarrhea may be caused or worsened by food or drink. Feeding your infant or child the right foods is recommended when he or she has diarrhea. During an illness, diarrhea may continue for 3 to 7 days. It is easy for a child with diarrhea to lose too much fluid from the body (*dehydration*). Fluids that are lost need to be replaced. Make sure your child drinks enough water and fluids to keep the urine clear or pale yellow.

NUTRITION FOR **INFANTS** WITH DIARRHEA:

- Continue to feed infants breast milk or full-strength formula as usual.
- You **do not** need to change to a lactose-free or soy formula unless you have been told to do so by your infant's doctor.
- Oral rehydration solutions (ORS) may be used to help keep your infant hydrated. Infants should **not** be given juices, sports drinks, or soda or pop. These drinks can make diarrhea worse.
- If your infant has been taking some table foods, a few choices that are tolerated well are rice, peas, potatoes, chicken, or eggs. They should feel and look the same as foods you would usually give.

© SEIF & ASSOCIATES, INC., 2008

NUTRITION FOR **CHILDREN** WITH DIARRHEA:

- Continue to feed your child a healthy, balanced diet as usual.
- Foods that may be better tolerated during illness with diarrhea are:
  - Starchy foods, such as rice, toast, pasta, low-sugar cereal, oatmeal, grits, baked potatoes, crackers, and bagels.
  - Low-fat milk (for children over 2 years of age).
  - Bananas or applesauce.
- High fat and high sugar foods are **not** tolerated well.
- It is important to give your child plenty of fluids when he or she has diarrhea. Recommended drinks are water, oral rehydration solutions, and dairy.
- You may make your own ORS by following this recipe:
  - 1/2 teaspoon table salt.
  - 3/4 teaspoon baking soda.
  - 1/3 teaspoon salt substitute (*potassium chloride*).
  - 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon sugar.
  - 1 quart of water.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your child is unable to keep fluids down.
- Your child starts to throw up (*vomit*) or diarrhea keeps coming back (*persistent*).
- Belly (*abdominal*) pain develops, increases, or can be felt in one place (*localizes*).
- Diarrhea becomes excessive or contains blood or mucus.
- Your child develops excessive weakness, dizziness, fainting, or extreme thirst.
- Your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Your baby is older than 3 months with a rectal temperature of 102º F (38.9º C) or higher.
- **Your baby is 3 months old or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4º F (38º C) or higher.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Watch your child's condition.
- Get help right away if your child is not doing well or gets worse.

Document Released: 01/09/2011 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.