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**I**nfectious diarrheal disease or acute gastroenteritis is one of the most common illnesses in childhood. This can be quite a significant problem for children in day care. There are many causes of diarrhea, most of which have no specific treatment.

Rotavirus, one of the most common causes of acute gastroenteritis, falls into this category.

#### What are the symptoms?

The most common symptom is profuse, watery bowel movements. Other symptoms your child may experience include fever, rash and vomiting for the first 24- 48 hours. Diarrhea caused by viruses (the most common type of diarrhea) may last up to 14 days.

#### What can/should be done at home?

Because there is no medication that can cure it, treating the symptoms is the mainstay of therapy.



After earning her medical degree, Dr. Singh completed a residency at University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Dr. Singh is board certified and has been in private practice for 19 years.

The main symptom to be concerned with is dehydration. The amount of fluid and salts lost in the diarrhea can be significant, and thus both must be replaced.

Remember that treatment is not geared to make the diarrhea stop. Therefore, do not become distressed that the diarrhea has not gone away after a few days. It may last up to two weeks.

Replace fluids with a substance that contains both water and salts.

The best thing is to continue a regular diet. However, if vomiting is an issue, a simple salt-containing solution, such as Pedialyte or Infalyte, should be started.

Substances like Gatorade have salts, but they have a lot of sugar as well, which can make the diarrhea worse. However, as a parent who has tried to get my children to take this salty fluid, I can tell you some children will absolutely refuse to take it. Therefore, you may have to

# Diarrhea



compromise and use any liquid they will take.

The most important thing to remember: Getting your child back onto solid foods (or breast milk or formula) again is the best way to treat diarrhea.

Sometimes a lactose-free formula is prescribed briefly because of secondary lactose intolerance. Initially, the vomiting will hold you back from advancing to a regular diet. But once this has subsided, you will be able to go back to regular food. Not only does this provide the salts the body is lacking, but it also nourishes the cells that have been damaged by the virus. Study after study has shown that feeding a regular diet as soon as possible decreases the length of time diarrhea lasts.

If a person in your family has acquired this virus, the best thing you can do to keep other members from getting it is to wash your hands.

**If you are in need of a pediatrician and would like to schedule an appointment with Dr. Singh, call 281-374-9700.**

#### Get immediate attention if:

- *The diarrhea has blood in it*
- *There are signs of dehydration (no tears when he/she cries, urination is decreased, the mouth looks like it has little saliva in it)*
- *The diarrhea lasts more than 14 days*
- *There is severe abdominal pain*
- *Fever lasts more than 48 hours*