



Integrative Pediatrics, LLC

Safe passage in a changing world.

DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is a gastrointestinal illness characterized by frequent, loose or watery bowel movements. It is most commonly caused by a viral infection. Though, occasionally it is caused by bacteria. Rare causes can be parasites, IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) or inflammatory bowel disease. 90 to 95% of the time it is caused by Rotavirus and is usually harmless unless severe dehydration occurs. Mild diarrhea is when you have a few loose stools. If the stools are watery and more than 8 per day, or there is blood and mucus in the stool, then the diarrhea is severe. Diarrhea usually lasts from several days to a week.

It might make sense to you to not let your child eat their normal diet when they have diarrhea, but experts now say the “**BRAT**” diet is usually not necessary. Because the **BRAT** diet is low in fiber, protein and fat, the diet lacks enough nutrition to help in recovering from illness.

But not all kids want to eat their regular diet when they are sick and there are some circumstances in which giving kids their regular foods might make them feel worse, which is why it can be a good idea to avoid certain foods like fruit juices, soft drinks or gelatin/jello which are high in sugar. You may also want to avoid spicy foods, excessive fatty foods and high-fiber foods for several days after experiencing diarrhea.

Since your body loses lots of water through diarrhea, dehydration is a concern. Drink plenty of clear liquids such as Pedialyte (for infants & toddlers), Gatorade or Propel (for older children), these help replace lost electrolytes. Also offer water and broth. You should avoid fruit juice until diarrhea has ended. *An electrolyte fluid may be helpful in preventing dehydration if experiencing both vomiting and diarrhea.

Keep in mind you should avoid giving your child just Pedialyte, (unless instructed by your Pediatrician) for more than 12 hours.

If milk or other foods make your child worse, causing vomiting, bloating, abdominal pain, or more severe diarrhea, then you might need to temporarily eliminate dairy products. .

Note; anytime **BRAT** foods are used, return to a normal diet within 24 hours.

The original BRAT Diet consists of:

- Bananas
- Rice
- Applesauce
- Toast

Since some of those foods, especially bananas and rice, are 'binders' and are considered to be constipating, they might help diarrhea. Soda crackers, plain boiled potatoes, clear soups, and rice are other bland food choices that may be beneficial.

Call your doctor if there are signs of dehydration-

- Diarrhea that lasts for more than three days. Diarrhea with lots of blood and mucus in the stool.
- Your child has a temperature of 102 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- There is a reduced urine output, has no tears or has sunken cheeks
- Your child is experiencing lightheadedness.
- If your child is lethargic or is difficult to arouse.
- There is blood or lots of mucous (slime) in the stool.