

Let's Talk About...

Dehydration and feeding problems due to respiratory illness in infants

What is dehydration?

Dehydration (Dee-hi-dray-shun) means that your infant's body does not have as much water or fluids as it should.

What causes dehydration?

- Your infant may not eat or drink enough because:
 - They have a stuffy nose.
 - They are breathing very fast.
 - They are not hungry because they are sick.
 - They have a sore throat and refuse to eat.
 - They are nauseated and refuse to eat.
- Your infant may lose too much fluid because:
 - They are vomiting or they have diarrhea.
 - They have a fever or they are sweating a lot.

What causes dehydration in respiratory illness?

When your infant's nose is stuffed up, they can't breathe through it and have to breathe through their mouth. This makes it very hard to suck on a bottle and breathe at the same time.

How do I recognize dehydration in my infant?

- Your infant has a dry mouth, dry/cracked lips, or the spit in their mouth is thick.
- There is just a small amount of dark urine in their diaper.
- Your infant has less than one wet diaper every 6–8 hours.
- The soft spot (fontanel) on their head sinks in when they are held up or sits up.
- Your infant has dry or wrinkled skin.
- Your infant has dark circles around their eyes.



- Your infant may be fussy, sleepy, not hungry or difficult to wake up.
- If you notice any of these things, start keeping a record of the following things. This will help your doctor treat your infant. Keep a record of:
 - Everything they eat and drink.
 - The number of wet diapers you have changed in the last day.
 - The color of their urine.
 - The number of bowel movements (poopy diapers) they have had and what they are like (color and how hard or soft they are).

If your infant is not taking or keeping down any fluids, call your doctor.

If you think your infant has dehydration, call your doctor immediately or go to the Emergency Room.



Being admitted to the hospital for dehydration

If your infant has been unable to drink or keep down enough fluids, they may become dehydrated and require admission to the hospital. If they are admitted to the hospital, the nurse may place an IV (small tube that goes into the vein), to give your infant fluids. This treatment is temporary until your infant can drink and keep down enough fluids.

Your child may also need a feeding tube. A small, soft tube is placed into their nose and guided to their stomach (known as an NG tube). Food or fluids can then be given through the tube as needed.

Going home from the hospital after admission

Infants admitted to the hospital for dehydration can usually go home when they drink enough fluid and are able to keep it down, have plenty of wet diapers, and are not having significant difficulty breathing. Every once in a while, an infant may be sent home with a feeding tube.

How can I help my infant?

- Check your infant's breathing rate by counting the number of times they breathe in one minute. If your infant takes a breath more than 60 times in a minute and this goes on for more than 45 minutes, do not feed your infant. Call your doctor right away.
- You should not feed your infant if they are breathing faster than 60 times in a minute because they might get food into their lungs. This is called aspiration (ass-per-rayshun), which is when food or drink goes down the windpipe. This can lead to infections in the lungs (pneumonia) and may even cause more trouble breathing.
- To help your baby breathe more normally, try bulb suctioning your baby's nose. After bulb suctioning, wait 15 minutes. If your baby is still breathing faster than 60 breaths in a minute, do not feed them and call your doctor.
- If your child frequently coughs, turns blue, makes sputtering sounds or seems to be choking while eating: stop feeding them and call your doctor immediately.

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助