

Diarrhoea in Children

Tummy-ache and diarrhoea are unpleasant enough to deal with it as an adult but it's even more difficult for children. It improves after two to four days in adults, if this were the case for children it could lead to dangerous **dehydration**.

The loss of **fluids** that occurs during diarrhoea leads to dehydration, which is why it is necessary to start taking fluids as soon and as often as possible. **Contrary to popular belief**, drinking cola and eating pretzels is not enough as they won't replace the correct amounts of sugar, salt and other minerals lost. This is where oral rehydration solutions (ORSs) come in. ORSs are over-the-counter products with the correct amount of sugar, salt, **potassium** and other minerals.

Female Pharmacy customer:

Hello, do you speak English?

PTA: Yes, a little. How can I help?

Do you have loperamide, you know for diarrhoea?

Of course. Just a moment. Would you like a packet of six or twelve?

I think a packet of six should be okay. It is very effective at dealing with diarrhoea, isn't it?

It certainly is! Is it for yourself?

No, it's for my son. Why?

How old is your son?

He's nine and in the third grade.

I'm sorry, but I can't sell you these.

Why not? I take loperamide any time I get diarrhoea and I have never had any problems.

Which is good. It's not recommended to give it to children under twelve, unless your GP has recommended it.

I thought loperamide has very few side effects.

Which is also correct but it is more important to give your child fluids than trying to **alleviate** the symptoms of diarrhoea.

I see. So, what do you recommend?

It's generally recommended to give the child an oral rehydration solution, especially after each **bowel movement**. In fact, if your son is thirsty you should give him something to drink.

Can I give him fruit juice?

No, I can't recommend that you do. The acid will only irritate the bowel even more and you should avoid giving him **fizzy drinks** or similar.

What about eating?

If your son is feeling hungry, then it's alright to give him light and **easily digestible** foods. It's better to give him smaller portions several times a day than the usual three. Depending on his appetite up to six meals is okay.

What kind of food do you recommend?

Grated apple is ideal as the oxidized pectin will help stop the diarrhoea. Bananas are a classic **tummy trouble** food and mashed carrots and potatoes are also helpful. Pasta and rice are okay as long as they are not served with anything spicy, oily or fatty. In fact if he fancies something particular you should try it with him.

Thank you, I'll remember that.

Which flavour ORS would you like for your son? We have neutral, strawberry or apple-banana.

I'll take a 20-sachet packet in apple-banana.

Please make sure to give him a glass of solution each time he has a watery **stool** and continue giving it to him until the diarrhoea is gone. If it lasts a total of two days without improvement, it is absolutely essential to take him to a doctor immediately.

Thank you, I certainly will. ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

tummy-ache	Bauchschmerzen
dehydration	Flüssigkeitsmangel
fluids	Flüssigkeiten
contrary to	entgegen dem
popular belief	allgemeinen Glauben
potassium	Kalium
side effects	Nebenwirkungen
alleviate	lindern
bowel movement	Stuhlgang
bowel	Darm
fizzy drinks	kohlensäurehaltige Getränke
easily digestible	leicht verdaulich
grated	gerieben, geraspelt
tummy trouble	Bauchbeschwerden
stool	Stuhlgang