



**ORAL
REHYDRATION
THERAPY**

Brings back life



“ Diarrhoea kills by removing water and salts from the body, Give the child ORS and other fluids as soon as the diarrhoea starts ”

INTRODUCTION

Diarrhoea is one of the common health problems throughout the world. In Botswana it is one of the leading causes of death among children under five years. Most children die from diarrhoea because they do not have enough fluids and salts left in their bodies. This is known as dehydration. Children are more likely to die of diarrhoea than adults because they become dehydrated quickly.

Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) is a simple treatment for dehydration associated with diarrhoea and or vomiting. The treatment comprises of replacement of fluids and salts lost due to diarrhoea, using Low Osmolarity Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and other fluids, continued feeding and Zinc Sulphate tablet.

WHAT IS DIARRHOEA?

A child has diarrhoea when he/she passes loose or watery stools three or more times in a day (24 hours)

WHAT CAUSES DIARRHOEA?

Diarrhoea is caused by germs that a child ingests in contaminated water or food. It can also be caused by poor nutrition and food poisoning. Also a child presenting with infections like measles, rotavirus, pneumonia, and malaria may have diarrhoea.

HOW IS DIARRHOEA TRANSMITTED?

Diarrhoea is transmitted through contaminated food and water. Germs in stools can contaminate hands, and if they are not washed with soap and clean water, the hands can contaminate water and food. Flies and cockroaches may also transfer germs from stools to food. In this way diarrhoea passes from one person to another.

WHY IS DIARRHOEA DANGEROUS?

The main dangers in diarrhoea are dehydration and malnutrition.

• Dehydration

When a child has diarrhoea, the body loses a lot of water and salts resulting in the body becoming dehydrated which is the main cause of death.

- **Malnutrition**

Apart from losing water and salts due to diarrhoea, a child may lose appetite leading to reduced food intake and malnutrition.

SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

Do not allow your child to reach any of this stage:

1. Restless, irritable or lethargic
2. Thirsty and develops a dry mouth or not able to drink
3. Pinched skin goes back slowly or very slowly.
4. Sunken eyes
5. No tears when the child cries
6. Fever
7. Sunken fontanel

HOW TO PREVENT DIARRHOEA

Some of the practices that can be done to prevent diarrhoea in children are the following:

1. EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING

Give your child breast milk only during the first 6 months of life. Continue breastfeeding after the child begins to take complementary foods up to two years.

Breastfed children are less likely to get diarrhoea. Breast milk is the best food for young children, it helps to prevent and stop diarrhoea and other infections.



2. USE OF SAFE AND CLEAN WATER

- Tap water is generally safe for adults. However, for babies and young children it should be boiled before drinking.
- Collect and keep water in clean and covered containers.
- Keep sources of water clean (e.g. rivers, dams, reservoirs) by not contaminating them with stool, urine or rubbish. Also avoid bathing, washing clothes, pots, utensils near the source of water.

3. PRACTICE GOOD PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC HYGIENE

3.1 Hand washing



Always wash hands with soap and clean water before preparing food, eating, feeding children and after toilet use. Children's hand should be washed too.

3.2 Food handling

- Wash hands with soap and clean water before handling food
- Prepare food in a clean place using clean pots and utensils.
- Serve cooked food while it is still hot.
- Cover foods to avoid contamination by insects and dust.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing and serving them.

Use of latrines

- Construct a latrine at least 10 meters away from a source of water supply.
- Keep latrines clean to keep flies and other insects away.
- Properly dispose off all stools including that of children in the latrine.

Refuse disposal

- Dispose refuse into the rubbish bins or black plastic bags whilst awaiting collection by the local authority, such temporary storage should be a reasonable distance away from the water source.

4. IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunize your child as per the immunization schedule especially against Measles and Rotavirus. A child who is not immunized is at risk of Measles and diarrhoea

a) Measles vaccinations

- Measles infections may cause diarrhoea
- Immunize your children against measles at the ages of 9 months, 18 months and during Measles and Vitamin A campaign.

b) Rotavirus vaccinations

- Rotavirus is an infection that causes severe diarrhoeal disease in infants and young children.
- Immunize your child against rotavirus at two and three months of age.

NB; if you have a child under the age of five years, ensure that you always have 2 sachets of ORS and 2 tablets of Zinc Sulphate at home. These must be given to the child as soon as diarrhoea starts and immediately take the child to the nearest health facility

If you do not have the supplies (i.e ORS and Zinc sulphate tablets), ask from the nearest health facility.

HOW TO TREAT DIARRHOEA AT HOME

As soon as diarrhoea starts:

- **Give more fluids than usual.**
- Give Low Osmolarity, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) and recommended home-based fluids such as water from cooked rice or samp water.
- The Low Osmolarity ORS is recommended because of low concentration of ingredients that reduces the amount and frequency of diarrhoea, vomiting and reduction in duration of diarrhoea.

NB; Soft drinks such as sweetened fruit drinks, sweetened tea, and coffee should be avoided because of high concentration of sugar which can worsen diarrhoea

• Give Zinc Sulphate

Zinc Sulphate functions by restoring immunity. It reduces the severity and duration of the diarrhoea.

- Zinc Sulphate is used in addition to ORS to all children under 5 years of age when they have diarrhoea.

• **Continue Feeding**

Continued feeding during diarrhoea as it speeds the recovery of children.

- If the child is breastfeeding or formula feeding continue to feed frequently
- If the child is already on ordinary food, increase food intake by giving small frequent meals, especially after diarrhoea to prevent malnutrition
- Give the child cooked and mashed or well ground food so that it will be easy to digest.
- The following are good choices for feeding children with diarrhoea and some are the best sources of zinc: yoghurt, rice, noodles, potatoes, eggs (hard boiled), peanut butter (smooth), white bread, fruits, well cooked vegetables, chicken, beef, lamb, pork, fish, maize meal and sorghum porridge.
- Include fresh fruits juice, cloudy apple juice or ripe bananas.
- After the diarrhoea stops; one extra meal each day for a week or more will help the child recover lost nutrients, gain strength and weight.



RETURN YOUR CHILD TO THE HEALTH FACILITY IF S/HE:

- Seems no to get better
- Starts to pass bloody loose stools
- Vomit frequently
- Has difficulty in eating and drinking anything
- Starts having fever

RETURN FOR FOLLOW-UP

Return the child to the health facility for review as advised by health worker.

Note: Avoid use of self prescribed medicine for diarrhoea treatment without Doctor's consultation.



*For more Information Contact
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MINISTRY of HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

