

ORS & DEHYDRATION TRIAGE GUIDE

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Dehydration & ORS Triage Guide

Your quick-reference tool for managing dehydration in babies and children at home

STEP 1 — IS THIS MILD, MODERATE OR SEVERE?

MILD	MODERATE	SEVERE — ACT NOW
Slightly less urine	Sunken soft spot (babies)	Cannot wake up / limp
Increased thirst	No diaper 4-8+ hrs (babies)	No diaper 6-10+ hrs (babies)
Dry lips	Dry mouth, fewer tears	Bone-dry mouth, no tears at all
Low energy	Dizziness when standing (older kids)	Confusion / fainting (older kids)
	No urine 10+ hrs (older kids)	No urine 12+ hrs (older kids)

SEVERE = Seek immediate medical attention. Green bile vomit = Emergency Dept NOW.

STEP 2 — ORS DOSING (FIRST 4 HOURS)

AGE GROUP	ORS PER HOUR	IF VOMITING (every 10-15 min)
Under 6 months	30-90 mL (1-3 oz)	15 mL (1 tbsp)
6 months - 2 years	90-125 mL (3-4 oz)	15 mL (1 tbsp)
Over 2 years	125-250 mL (4-8 oz)	15 mL (1 tbsp)

If child refuses cup: use syringe, dropper, spoon or ORS frozen pops.
Vomiting beyond 4-6 hours with no improvement: seek medical care.

STEP 3 — HOME CARE BY AGE

BABIES (Under 1 Year)	CHILDREN (1-11 Years)
Increase breastfeeding or bottle feeds. Newborn: +30 mL (1 oz) per feed. Older infant: up to +90 mL (3 oz).	Offer small, frequent sips. Never large amounts at once.
If intake is low: ask doctor about ORS. Give by dropper, spoon, or bottle.	Avoid juice, soda, sweet tea, broth, rice water — wrong electrolyte balance.
If solids have started: offer cereal with breast milk or mashed banana.	Use an ORS (e.g. Pedialyte). Choose pre-mixed pharmacy products.

STEP 4 — RECOVERY (4-24 HOURS)

AS SYMPTOMS IMPROVE	SIGNS YOUR CHILD IS RECOVERING
Continue ORS until vomiting or diarrhea slows.	More energy and alertness.
Resume breastfeeding on demand.	Wet diapers returning to normal.
Offer formula or milk.	Tears present when crying.
Reintroduce regular foods — small, frequent meals.	Accepting fluids well.

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STEP 5 — WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:	ALSO CALL IF:
Baby under 6 months + diarrhea	Cannot keep fluids down 4-6 hrs
Bloody or black stools	Diarrhea with fever
Vomits blood or bile	Worsening stomach pain
Refuses all fluids	Diarrhea lasting 1-2+ weeks

GREEN BILE VOMIT = Emergency Department immediately. Do not wait. Do not call first. Go.

QUICK PARENT CHECK — ASK YOURSELF:

QUESTION	GOOD SIGN	ACT IF...
Is my child alert?	Responsive, engaged	Hard to wake or limp
Are they urinating?	Regular wet diapers	No urine 6-12+ hrs
Are they drinking?	Accepting fluids	Refusing all fluids
Are symptoms improving?	Less vomiting/diarrhea	Worse after 4-6 hrs

Clinical Mama Takeaway

Dehydration can move fast — but when caught early, most cases stay home.

If symptoms worsen at any point, don't wait. Trust your instincts.

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