

Pointers For Parents

Health Warning: Parents And Caregivers Urged To *Don't Wait, Rehydrate Children*

(NAPS)—Nearly 10 percent of pediatric hospitalizations in the United States—approximately 50,000 rotavirus cases annually—are due to severe diarrhea and its complications, claiming the lives of approximately 400 children each year.

The critical importance of preventing dehydration in young children experiencing diarrhea is the focus of an educational campaign, *Don't Wait, Rehydrate*, launched by the National Association of Child Care Professionals (NACCP) and the Ross Products Division of Abbott Laboratories, makers of Pedialyte®.

Diarrhea in children is common, but its complications can be life threatening. The frequent passage of loose and watery stools that occurs during diarrhea drains water and salts from the body, and can rapidly lead to dehydration.

Diarrhea may result from a number of causes, including infection by viruses and bacteria, contaminated water or spoiled food, certain medications and food poisoning. However, the most common cause of severe diarrhea is rotavirus, an infection of the intestinal tract, which affects four out of five children in the United States before they reach the age of five.

The rotavirus is particularly common from November through April, and can be spread in a number of ways, including contact with contaminated surfaces, such as by diaper changing. A recent study in the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* reported that the virus was discovered in 18 percent of children tested in childcare centers.

The educational campaign urges parents and caregivers not to wait until a child exhibits these signs of complications before beginning measures to rehydrate the child and prevent dehydration. Dehydration can be prevented in cases of mild to moderate diarrhea by administering an oral electrolyte solution (OES) that contains the correct balance of carbohydrate and electrolytes to quickly and effectively rehydrate children immediately at the first

Dehydration Warning Signs Include:

- Diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours or gets worse (Mild diarrhea ordinarily lasts two to four days)
- Thirst is extreme, urination decreases and the child sheds no tears when crying
- Sunken eyes, unusual drowsiness or changes in behavior
- Blood in stool.



sign of diarrhea or vomiting. Liquids such as soft drinks, juices, or sports drinks may contain too much sugar and can sometimes make diarrhea worse. Likewise, salty broths or soups, special salt and fluid home remedies, or anti-diarrhea medicines should not be given to children unless prescribed by a physician.

“Parents and caregivers of young children, particularly those under the age of three, should be aware of the potential seriousness of diarrhea and the early signs of dehydration, and should have an oral electrolyte solution (OES) on hand to give to the child at the first signs of diarrhea,” said Dr. Mathuran Santosham, member of the Pediatric Institute and Professor of the Department of Pediatrics and Integrated Health at Johns Hopkins University.

Pedialyte is the number one oral electrolyte solution recommended by pediatricians to prevent dehydration due to diarrhea or vomiting. Available since 1966, Pedialyte contains the recommended balance of carbohydrate and electrolytes children need to help prevent dehydration. Pedialyte is available in unflavored and flavored varieties, and in liquid liters, single servings and freezer pops.

For more information about preventing dehydration, and advice about infant feeding, visit online at www.pedialyte.com. The sponsors of the educational campaign also can be contacted at: Ross Products (www.ross.com or 1-800-FORMULA) and the National Association of Child Care Professionals (www.NACCP.org or 512-301-5557).