

DIARRHEA, CHRONIC CHILDHOOD



BASIC INFORMATION

Diarrhea is called chronic when it lasts more than three weeks. Most cases of diarrhea in children are acute and last less than 10 days. Nonspecific chronic diarrhea usually affects otherwise healthy children ages 1-3.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Loose stools, sometimes watery.
- Stools are sometimes normal.
- Stools are more frequent than usual.
- Pain in the stomach area.
- Occasional soreness of the anal area caused by many bowel movements.

CAUSES

Nonspecific means no cause has been found such as infection or food intolerance. It may have to do with some aspect of the diet. Sometimes, the children affected drink excessive amounts of fluid or juices (such as apple juice).

RISK INCREASES WITH

No specific risk factors.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

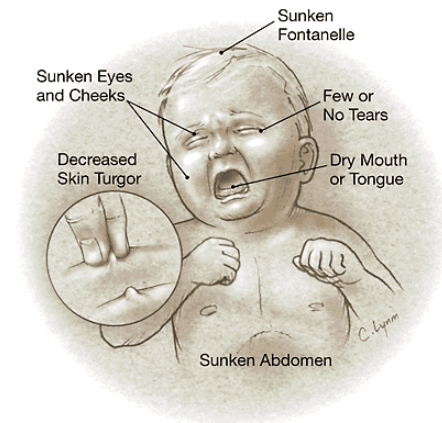
Cannot be prevented at present.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Despite the chronic diarrhea, affected children grow and develop normally. Diet changes can help resolve the diarrhea symptoms in some children. In others, bowel movements often become normal at about age 4.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Usually no complications. Emotional problems such as anxiety may occur with parents and children.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT GENERAL MEASURES

- Your child's doctor will do a physical exam and ask questions about the symptoms. Information about your child's activities, and eating and drinking habits will help with the diagnosis. Medical tests may be done to rule out any specific cause.
- Treatment may include diet changes for your child or lifestyle changes such as being more active.
- Don't blame or criticize your child for this problem. Don't expect toilet training to be successful as soon as with some other children. Treat your child as normal and try to ignore the problem. Avoid tension. If the child becomes anxious about diarrhea, the problem may become worse or emotional problems may arise.

MEDICATIONS

Drugs are usually not necessary for this disorder. Your child's health care provider may sometimes prescribe anti-diarrhea drugs for a short period of time. Don't give your child herbal products or other dietary supplements without medical approval.

DIARRHEA, CHRONIC CHILDHOOD

ACTIVITY

Your child should be physically active as appropriate for the age group.

DIET

Your child's doctor will discuss diet changes with you. The goal is to achieve a healthy diet with regard to fat, fiber, fluids, and fruit juices. High-fiber foods such as beans, fruit, breads, and cereals are important in the diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- Your child has diarrhea that lasts over 3 weeks.
- There is blood in the stool.
- Fever occurs.
- Your child becomes listless, refuses to eat, or cries loudly and persistently, even when picked up.
- Your child begins to lose weight or is not growing as expected.
- You have any other questions or concerns, call Canadian Medical Care (+420) 235 360 133, CMC in The Park (+420) 272 913 593, or after hours (+420) 724 300 303.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- www.keepkidshealthy.com
- www.patients.uptodate.com (search for digestive disease)

SOURCE

- Moore, Stephen. Griffith's Instructions for Patients, 7th Edition. Elsevier: 2005.

Updated and reviewed by: E. Jona, March 2006