



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Caring for Your Sick Baby or Young Child

Caring for Your Baby or Young Child at Home

Most of the time, babies and young children who are sick can be cared for at home. When babies and young children are sick and do not eat or drink regularly, they may get low blood sugar or become dehydrated. This is rare, but means they need urgent medical care.

If your baby or child is sick, offer small amounts of breastmilk/chestmilk/formula or food and drink often. This will help keep them hydrated and give them energy. You can also buy electrolyte replacement drinks and freezer pops (such as Pedialyte) from the pharmacy to keep at home.

Some electrolyte replacement products are covered by First Nations Health Benefits. You will need a prescription from a doctor (physician) or nurse practitioner. You can also visit, or make an appointment with, your local pharmacist for an assessment. In some cases, the pharmacist may recommend an electrolyte replacement product covered by your benefits plan.

You know your baby/child best and what their usual way of behaving and feeding is. If something does not feel right, act on it. Talk to someone:

- Call 811 and speak with a nurse (24/7)
- Call 911 and speak to the paramedics
- A first responder, health centre nurse, doctor, nurse practitioner, midwife
- Go to the hospital

Babies and young children need urgent medical help if they are dehydrated or have low blood sugar.

Signs of low blood sugar

- Floppy when picked up
- Trembling or shaky
- Cold, wet or sweaty skin
- Sleepy and hard to wake up
- Cold hands and feet
- Difficulty holding things
- Difficulty walking straight
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Blurred vision
- Irritable or restless

Signs of dehydration

- Soft, sunken spot on head (babies)
- Sleepy and hard to wake up
- Dry mouth and tongue
- Dry eyes, no tears or less tears than normal
- Peeing less than usual, wetting less diapers
- Fast heartbeat
- Sunken eyes
- Greyish skin

You don't need to be alone when your child or baby is sick. It's a strength to ask for help.

If you live far away from medical services and need to go to the hospital, make sure you have enough time to get there. If you can't speak to a local provider right away, call 811 or a first responder. For babies under 6 months with fever, vomiting or diarrhea – call 911, a first responder, or take them to emergency.

Get medical help right away, if your baby or young child:

- Seems very sick
- Won't eat or drink at all, or not very much
- Has fever, vomiting or diarrhea
- Has signs of low blood sugar or dehydration (see page 1)
- If you're seeing other symptoms not listed here

The way you feed your baby is different when they are sick than when they are healthy.

Baby's age	Feeding when healthy	Feeding when sick
0 – 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Every 2–3 hours- Breastfeed, chestfeed or formula feed on demand- Call your health care provider if your baby goes longer than 4–5 hours between feeds in the first few weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- At least every 2 hours- Breastfeed, chestfeed or formula feed smaller amounts often, day and night- Wake the baby to feed during the night (set an alarm)- Offer electrolyte replacement drinks or freezer pops ONLY if your health provider recommends this (see page 1).
3 – 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Every 3-5 hours- Breastfeed, chestfeed or formula feed on demand- Feedings will get shorter and babies may feed less often as they get older	
6 – 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offer food/drink every 3-4 hours during the day- Your baby can sleep 8–10 hours at night without feeds- Offer food, breastmilk or formula before bedtime and after waking in the morning	
Over 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Offer 3 meals and 3 snacks each day- Offer breakfast when your child wakes up- You can continue to breastfeed or chestfeed for 2 years or longer	