UW Medicine

# Oral Rehydration Therapy
*For mild dehydration*

*This handout explains how to use oral rehydration therapy to treat mild dehydration. It includes signs of dehydration, hydration instructions, and when to get medical help.*

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## Mild Dehydration
You are at risk of dehydration when you lose more fluids than you take in. We are prescribing you oral rehydration therapy, which will help you replace the fluids in your body quickly.

## Signs of Dehydration
- Dry mouth or thirst
- Dark colored urine or urinating less than usual
- Fatigue, weakness, dizziness
- Muscle cramps

## How to Rehydrate
Your goal is to take 1000 mL of electrolyte replacement drink in small sips over 2 hours.

- Drink two large sips (about 30 mL) every 3 to 5 minutes. You may find it helpful to use a straw or add ice to your drink.

- If you're having pain when drinking or swallowing, you can take an over-the-counter pain medication such as Tylenol or ibuprofen. You can also use Benzocaine or menthol lozenges. Wait 20 minutes after taking medication before continuing to drink.

- If we prescribe you an anti-nausea medication:
  - Take the medication as prescribed.
  - If your nausea is severe, wait 20 minutes after taking your medications to begin drinking. If your nausea is not severe you can start drinking immediately.
  - If you vomit, slow down your drinking pace.

## When to Get Help

Call your provider right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Continuous vomiting
- Frequent diarrhea (more than 5 times a day)
- Blood (red or black color) in stool
- Mucus in diarrhea
- Swollen abdomen
- Abdominal pain that is getting worse
- Urinating less or having extreme thirst
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher

**Call 911** or get medical care right away if you have any of these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Weakness, dizziness, or fainting
- Unusual drowsiness or confusion
- Blood in your vomit