

Diarrheal Disease and Rehydration- Essential Information

2 million people die each year from diarrheal illnesses, and it is also a huge problem in Kenya especially in children under 5 years old.

Diarrhea causes death through causing the body to lose a lot of fluid. Because of this it is very important to make sure the patient is taking extra fluids than normal.

What Causes Diarrhea?

Diarrhea is caused by an infection of bacteria, viruses or parasites. These infectious organisms decrease fluid absorption in the intestines.

Symptoms of Diarrheal Disease

- watery and/or frequent stools (more than 4 per day)
- on and off abdominal pain
- stools may have mucous or blood in them
- nausea
- fever
- vomiting

If there is any blood in the stools, if the person cannot keep any fluids down or if the diarrhea has lasted more than 3 days, you should seek immediate advice from a health-care worker, as dehydration can cause death quickly.

Signs of dehydration

- decreased urine output
- tiredness
- dry mouth and lips
- fast heart beat

If someone is dehydrated it is essential that they see a health-care worker. If they cannot, it is important that they take in more fluids than usual and continue to eat regularly.

Fluids that can be used include, breastmilk, rice water, home made or store bought rehydration solution.

Homemade Rehydration Solution

- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 6-8 level teaspoons of sugar
- one litre of clean drinking or boiled water and then cooled
- mix together well and encourage frequent sips

Preventing Diarrheal Illness

- Good hygiene eg washing hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet and before preparing food or feeding children
- Disposing of all faeces in a toilet or burying them
- Boiling all water for at least 3 minutes before drinking or cooking (milk should also be boiled before used)
- Breastfeeding children can reduce their chances of getting diarrhea

The Shikunga Health-care clinic offers a range of health services. For more information, please feel free to speak to the nurse or clinical officer at Shikunga Health-care clinic.

Any questions asked will be kept **confidential** and you will be treated with **respect** and **dignity**.