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THE ORT BROCHURE

A Pocket Reference for Scouts

**WORLD ORGANISATION OF THE SCOUT MOVEMENT
UNICEF**

THE FACTS

Nearly 3 million children die each year of diarrheal diseases around the world and many more suffer from its complications. Tragically, 90% (2.7 million) of them can be saved if correct treatment is given. For diarrheal diseases, the best treatment is **Oral Rehydration Therapy or ORT**. ORT is inexpensive and is available in most homes, but very few use it, because many people don't know what ORT is!

It is important that every parent know the dangers of diarrhea, as well as it's appropriate treatment and prevention. Globally the goal to achieve is 80% ORT use.

THE PROBLEM

Diarrhea is caused by the ingestion of germs which have contaminated water, foodstuffs, hands, or eating, drinking & cooking utensils. It occurs primarily in developing countries, in the poor and overcrowded areas, where safe drinking water and good sanitation are lacking.

Diarrhea is defined as the passing of 3 or more watery stools in one day.

During diarrhea, water and salts are lost from the body. If these losses are not replaced, a condition called dehydration develops, which can lead to death.

ORT has been universally accepted as the best treatment for diarrhea. It also prevents the development of dehydration if given when diarrhea starts.

It is important to continue to feed during diarrhea to prevent development of malnutrition, which affects a child's growth.

THE TREATMENT

ORT = INCREASED FLUIDS + FEEDING

Fluids: it is important to give increased fluids during diarrhea to restore what is lost. Several types of fluids are recommended:

- **Breastfeeding** is ideal for the first 4-6 months of life, and if possible should be continued for upto 2 years; it provides a child with nourishing food, and in addition helps protect from certain infections, including diarrheal diseases.
- **Home fluids:**
 - * rice & cereal based gruels
 - * yoghurt based drinks
 - * potato/ taro gruels
 - * salty vegetable soups
 - * green coconut water.Water (cleanest & safest available) and tea can be given only if the child is also given food.
- **Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) solution**, prepared by dissolving 1 ORS packet in 1 liter of water, is an excellent fluid even for severe and acute cases of diarrhea such as cholera;

Give:

- 1/2 cup to young child, spoon by spoon, after each stool
- 1 cup to an older child after each stool.

Feeding: continue to feed child during diarrhea and in addition give an extra meal each day upto 1 week after diarrhea stops.

Even if child vomits, give small, frequent meals but do not stop or reduce feeding.

Fast referral: if a child does not get better in 3 days or if his/ her condition gets worse, he/ she should be taken immediately to a health professional. The danger signs parents have to learn to recognize are:

- extreme thirst
- poor feeding and drinking
- blood in stools = dysentery
- frequent vomiting
- fever
- many watery stools.

THE OTHER TREATMENTS

Antibiotics should be given by a doctor only for serious conditions like cholera & dysentery. Most common causes of diarrhea require only ORT.

The body automatically eliminates the germs in a few days. Antidiarrheals can delay elimination of these germs and thus delay recovery, so avoid taking them.

THE PREVENTION

Diarrheal diseases can be prevented if simple measures of hygiene are taken:

- wash hands with water and soap after using latrines
- wash hands with water and soap after disposing child's stools
- wash hands before handling foodstuffs
- breastfeed especially during first 4-6 months and upto 2 years if possible, as it provides protection against certain infections
- drink clean, safe water; boil it before drinking if necessary
- measles immunization is a protective factor for diarrheal diseases
- cover foodstuffs and water to avoid contamination.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

ORT can save lives and it is important that every knows about it and uses it for all cases of diarrhea. Communication of this knowledge to families to achieve 80% ORT use, is the principal goal. Many methods of communication may be used. You can:

- create & distribute promotional material: flyers, pamphlets, stickers, T-shirts etc., making sure that the message is simple and to the point
- reach out to every family by visiting homes, and explain diarrhea to every family member:
 - * what it is
 - * why it is dangerous
 - * how to treat it: ORT/ ORS solution preparation methods, continued feeding, and the danger signs parents should learn to recognize
 - * how to prevent it,using flipcharts, photos, simple utensils etc.; the family could receive a certificate when all members have understood ORT
- focus on groups of people at schools, marketplaces and health centers:
 - * set up ORT stalls to demonstrate ORS solution preparation
 - * put up posters
 - * distribute flyers & pamphlets so that the message gets to the homes
 - * encourage people to ask questions
- communicate through art:
 - * do role play
 - * compose songs
 - * organise painting & drawing competitions
 - * create a puppet show
 - * encourage mothers to share their ORT experiences with others
 - * integrate ORT into local radio, TV and theater shows, and into local, regional & global Jamboree in the Air
 - * create a comic stripputting your creativity and imagination to work

- write/ speak about ORT in your own words through:
 - * articles in school & club newspaper
 - * short stories
 - * speeches/ debates at jamborees

- participate actively in the health activities (health weeks/ fortnights) of the community:
 - * help explain the message, demonstrate ORT/ORS preparation, and distribute flyers & pamphlets
 - * help improve hygiene by contributing in the construction of water pumps, wells & latrines

- organise a rally to thank those who have worked for the ORT campaign:
 - * share your experiences
 - * take pride in the progress made thus far, awarding merit badges to those who have attained their goal
 - * reconfirm your promise to further mobilize for ORT

- practice what you preach by using ORT every time you or a family member has diarrhea; this is an essential element to show that you believe in ORT, and it will encourage your friends and neighbours to use it too.

You are now empowered with the knowledge of ORT, so pick up your tools and pool your efforts with that of others, to make ORT a reality in every home!

*"Arise, Awake, Stop not until the job is done."
Swami Vivekananda*