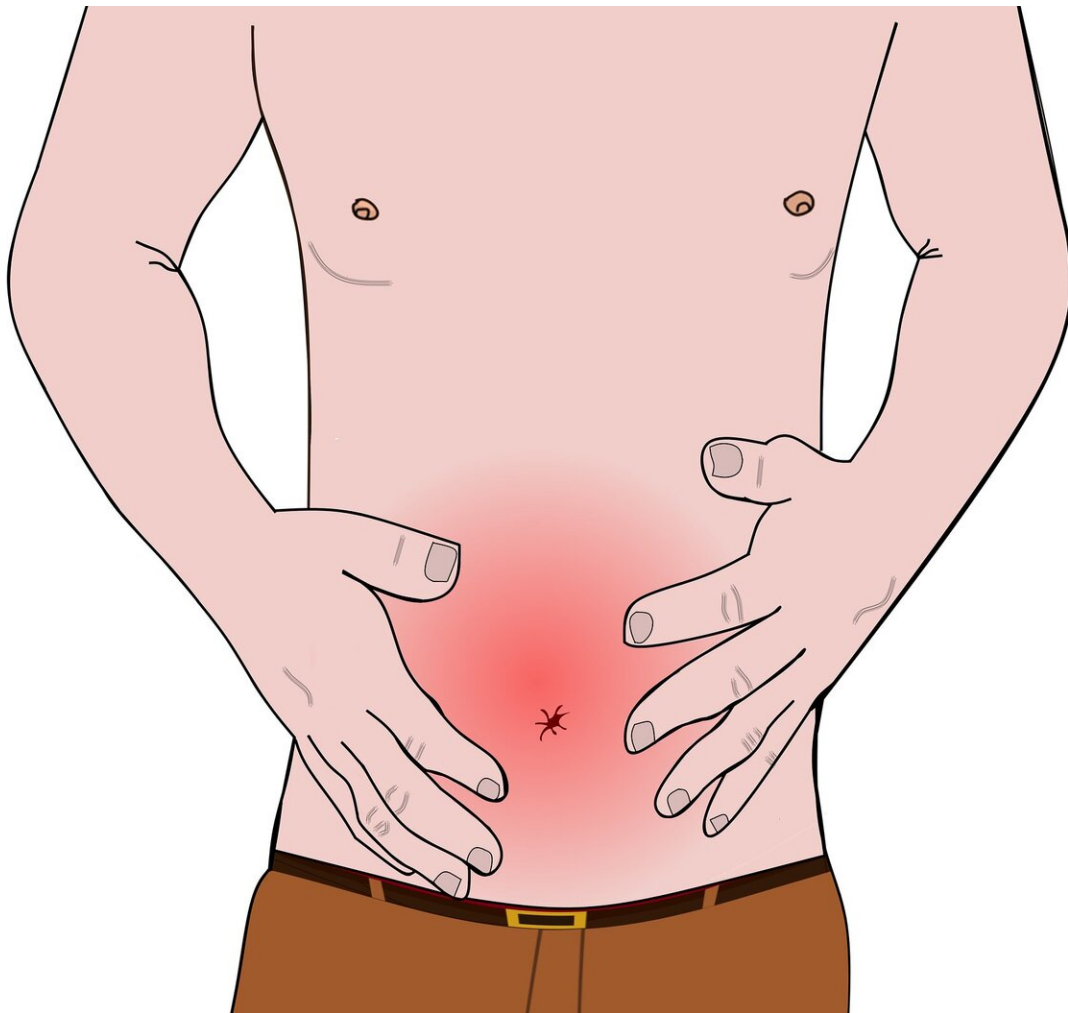


Experts caution about risks of dehydration from diarrhea caused by COVID-19

September 23 2020, by Waun'shae Blount



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COVID-19 can present a variety of symptoms, but one potentially dangerous symptom most people aren't particularly excited to talk about is diarrhea. An estimated 20% of COVID-19 patients are likely to experience diarrhea soon after contracting the disease. The CDC notes that people with compromised immune systems, like those recovering from COVID-19, are at the greatest risk of developing diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms, including vomiting and nausea.

Diarrhea could be dangerous if untreated, particularly in children. The CDC says one in nine children nationwide have died from complications from [diarrhea](#).

When someone is experiencing diarrhea, their bodies are no longer maintaining the important balance of water and sodium, often leading to dehydration. This dehydration, coupled with COVID-19, can affect the function of a person's lungs, which can result in pneumonia. In severe cases, diarrhea can affect a person's kidney and liver function, mental state, heart rate and breathing. It can also lead to a full-body infection known as sepsis, and in some circumstances, can lead to death.

The best way to treat dehydration from diarrhea is to use proper oral hydration to restore fluid loss. These products are often sold over the counter. The right oral hydration product typically contains a balance of sodium, potassium, glucose, starch, citrate and bicarbonate acids. The World Health Organization says oral rehydration containing these ingredients are important to decrease the risk of water intoxication.

"For children and adults, it is important to monitor for dehydration caused by diarrhea before the illness becomes extreme. Starting oral rehydration within 24 hours of [symptom](#) onset can be lifesaving," says William Greenough, M.D., infectious disease expert and professor emeritus of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Greenough also notes that foods such as bananas, rice and toast are good binding agents to help settle one's stomach when they are experiencing diarrhea.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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