

# Flu Recovery Diet - BRAT

By Carolyn Nicolaysen

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To care for family members who are ill, there are several specific foods which should be stored. A pandemic flu is much more serious than a seasonal flu, however, many of the treatments for those suffering and recovering remain the same.

When children are young and suffer from a seasonal flu we are advised to feed them the **BRAT** diet as they recover. These foods will also help adults and all who are suffering from a pandemic flu.

**B= Banana** . Now we really can't store these effectively except to freeze a few. Bananas freeze best when left in the skin and stored in a freezer bag. They are great blended into a drink or added to banana bread, but after being frozen they are not great for eating. As an option, you could store freeze dried bananas, and reconstitute them like the dried strawberries in your morning cereal.

**R=Rice** . This one is very easy to store and should already be a part of your 3 month supply as well as long term storage. Rice is easy to digest for anyone recovering from a stomach or intestinal illness and also for anyone who has had surgery and is on a limited diet. White rice is what you want. Long grain, short grain, it doesn't matter, but it needs to be white. Rice can be purchased from the Church canneries, grocery stores, restaurant suppliers and membership stores. It will store for 20 plus years if kept in a cool, dark and dry environment. Pests and rodents love rice so be sure to store it in rodent proof containers.

Another use for rice: When suffering from the flu we always experience aches. A **warm rice pack** placed on an area that aches is wonderful. Make a few now or store a little extra rice so you have some to make rice packs when they are needed. The directions will be on my blog tomorrow.

**A=Applesauce** . This is one of those foods that should be on every shelf. It is easy to digest, perfect for infants and can be used in many recipes, making it easy to rotate. China has planted many apple orchards making our local apples less profitable to grow, and making it also more difficult to find apples for canning. Growers in the US have been removing orchards because of the flood of cheaper apples from China . During a pandemic, this source of imported apples would be interrupted. If you are considering planting fruit trees you should consider apples. Apples store well in a cool environment. Our ancestors stored and ate them all winter without refrigeration. They are also very easy to can... and have on hand for a pandemic.

**T=Toast** . No, you can't store large quantities of bread, but you can store flour and wheat to make your own. If you still have not learned the art of bread making, invite a friend or family member to teach you. There is nothing better than the smell of baking bread. That alone would cure me.

A few more foods are essential:

**Chicken soup**. Yes, really. Studies have shown that there are real health benefits from eating chicken soup. It helps relieve chest and nasal congestion and may inhibit inflammation that leads to the sore throat and phlegm we hate. It is also nutritious and fights dehydration - and of course, chicken soup tastes good and is easy to digest.

**Herbal teas**. They are easy to digest, feel good on a sore throat, and help to keep a patient hydrated.

**Dehydration is the largest cause of death from the flu.** **Herbal teas** like chamomile are soothing to the stomach, calm the nerves, and help relieve cold symptoms. Just ask your grandma if you don't believe me. Don't overlook Fennel and Raspberry herbal teas for their benefits as well.

**Flavored gelatins.** After surgery or serious illness, the first thing you may be given to eat is a gelatin. They are easy to swallow, ease the craving for something sweet, are easily digested, kids love them, they help prevent dehydration and gelatin takes very little time and effort to prepare. All of these are important when you are a caregiver and your time is spent treating those who are ill.

**Otter Pops.** As I mentioned before, dehydration for those battling the flu, is a huge problem. Otter Pops provide liquid in a form the kids will love. Recently I had a friend tell me her husband always buys Otter Pops for their food storage, he's an Otter Pop junkie. These are easy to place in the freezer and are ready in a few hours.

**Juices.** Juices are another way to maintain hydration. They can be used as drinks or frozen into popsicles. Juices **other than citrus** are the best to store for use during an illness because they are less acidic.

**Ginger Ale and Lemon-Lime sodas.** These are great to settle the stomach, but do not rely on them as hydration sources. Sodas will dehydrate the body. But, if you can find Ginger Ale made with real ginger, there could be some legitimate benefits in treating nausea, settling the digestive tract, and even relieving arthritis symptoms, according to some research. Remember though, ginger flavoring is not enough – we are talking about real ginger as a food ingredient. Sounds like a good reason to store and use some dried ginger or ginger capsules – though clearly, fresh ginger has the most benefit.

It is so important to store liquids, from the chicken soup to the frozen pops to the real ginger ale. Have you ever been sick and had liquids forced on you by a loving mom? Can't you hear her now: "Just drink a little more juice, it's good for you." Having juices, herbal teas, gelatins, and Otter Pops on hand makes hydration so much easier on the caregiver. One hour you take in juice, the next a popsicle and the next gelatin. Now you are much more likely to get the patient to cooperate and consume them all.

Food storage is an absolutely essential part of planning for a pandemic or other health emergency. Don't delay. It's apple season, find some apples and start canning. Homemade applesauce can even be a thoughtful Christmas gift in an attractive jar with a personal label! But the bottom line is being prepared in case of a pandemic, because if Secretary Leavitt is right, a pandemic in the 21st Century - if and when it comes - it will come to your and my hometown.

“Treating Dehydration,” *Tambuli*, Mar 1989, 37 - Liahona

It is important that Latter-day Saint families have a knowledge of how to recognize signs of dehydration, and how to prevent and treat it. Throughout the world, many children and adults suffer because of problems caused from dehydration. Even in the healthiest of societies children can die because they lose too much water from their bodies through vomiting and diarrhea. This loss of water is called *dehydration*. *Hydrate* means to have water. *Dehydrate* means to lose water. If our body loses more water than it takes in, we become dehydrated—a life-threatening condition.

It is especially easy for a child with diarrhea or vomiting to become dehydrated. It can also happen to a person who is too sick to take in enough food or liquid. People of any age can become dehydrated, but dehydration develops more quickly and is most dangerous in small children. Any child with watery diarrhea is in danger of dehydration.

It is important that each person in the family learn to recognize the different signs of dehydration and how to prevent and treat it. A dehydrated person will usually have a dry mouth, or the person will be thirsty. There will be little or no urine, or the urine will be a very dark color. There may be vomiting or diarrhea. The skin on the abdomen will not retract when pinched. The soft spot on the top of an infant’s head will sink in. The eyes may be sunken and tearless. There may be a sudden weight loss.

The World Health Organization recommends that a special drink be given to those who are suffering from dehydration. This *rehydration* drink is the best home treatment to give a person who is dehydrated because it replaces important salt and sugar lost in the body.

Dehydration can usually be prevented if the victim is given plenty of liquids or the rehydration drink at the very first signs of dehydration. This is especially important for small children with watery stools.

## Rehydration Drink

In one liter of water put 2 level tablespoons of sugar, 1/4 teaspoon of salt, and 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda (bicarbonate of soda). If you do not have soda, use another 1/4 teaspoon of salt. It is very important to get the right amounts of each of these ingredients in the rehydration drink. Before giving the drink, taste it and be sure it is no more salty than tears. If available, you can also add the juice from one orange, a mashed banana, or coconut water to the drink. Or make an **electrolyte drink** of 1 quart water, 1/2 tsp baking soda, 1/2 tsp salt, 3 or 4 Tbls sugar, 1/4 tsp salt substitute. Mix well and flavor with lemon juice or sugar-free Kool-Aid.

Give the dehydrated person sips of this drink every five minutes, day and night, until he begins to urinate normally. A large person needs three or more liters a day. A small child needs at least one liter a day, or one glass for each watery stool.

Keep giving the rehydration drink often, in small sips, even if the person vomits. Not all of the drink will be vomited. If the dehydration gets worse or if the person does not urinate within four to six hours, find a health worker who can help give liquid in a vein (intravenous solution).

When you give the rehydration drink, keep giving food, and keep giving breast milk to babies. In some countries, small envelopes of “rehydration salts” are available for mixing with water (usually 1 liter). These salts are good to use, but if they are not available, wise mothers can learn to make their own rehydration drink at home. If you do not have what is needed to make the rehydration drink, give clear liquids like water, fruit juice, or thin soup, until you are able to make the special drink. It would be wise to always keep the ingredients in your home as part of your family preparedness plan.