

## HEALTH STORIES: ABDUL AND SERI (DIARRHEA)

### INTRODUCTION:

There are many family traditions about how to treat various illnesses. But those family traditions don't always work. When is it time to consider a new way of doing things?

### STORY:

Abdul ran home from school almost as fast as on the day his sister Seri was born. As soon as he saw her in the courtyard his eyes lit up, for although Abdul was eight years old he loved to play with his little sister. She was only one and a half years old. She would clap her hands in delight when he made funny faces at her or giggle when he counted her toes. He had helped her with her first steps, picking her up gently when she tumbled.

But what was wrong today? Usually Seri toddled straight to her favorite Abdul with her arms outstretched. But now she just sat on the porch and gazed up at him with dull eyes. Quickly he lifted her up to his hip. He noticed that she had an unpleasant smell about her.

Grandma greeted him with a tired voice. Worried, Abdul asked her, "Is Seri sick? Why is she like this?"

"She's had several watery bowel movements today," answered grandma, "and she's been very fussy, Abdul, you must not let her have any food or drink so that the diarrhea will stop and she will get better."

Abdul thought for a moment and then he took a deep breath. "But Grandma," he cried out "in our health club at school our teacher told us that diarrhea is very dangerous. If the body loses its water it is like a plant that isn't watered. First it gets weak and then it dies. We have to give Seri enough to drink so she won't be weak like that."

Grandma could feel how much Abdul believed in what he was saying and she was very proud that her grandson had a chance to go school and learn new things, but still no one had ever given food or drink to a child with watery stool as long as she could remember. Then, while Abdul looked at her with pleading eyes and waited for her response, she thought of one of her own children that she had lost after two days of diarrhea. And what about little Tina next door who had died the same way? Grandma sighed and said gently to Abdul . "Perhaps your teacher is right, we should try the new way."

Our teacher showed us that we could mix a drink with sugar, clean water and a very small pinch of salt," said Abdul, "but she also told us that ordinary weak tea with a little sugar would work well."

Grandma smiled. She had made tea already and so they made it weak with some more boiled water and when it was cool enough gave it sip by sip to Seri who finished the whole glass and then another.

Suddenly Seri vomited and Grandma looked as if she were about to scold Abdul. "My teacher says not to worry if the child vomits in the beginning. Just try again," and he gave Seri another glass, but this time he helped her drink more slowly.

A little later Seri, already looking a little happier, squirmed off Abdul's lap and pointed to the cookie jar where they kept the cookies she loved. Abdul gave her one, then suddenly, and much to Grandma's dismay, she had diarrhea again.

"Don't worry Grandma, she is already a bit better," said Abdul. "Look how eager she is to have the cookie and she is still thirsty. She is trying to reach the glass." So they went on giving drinks to Seri. They also gave her coconut milk, which she loved, and fruit juice. Gradually she became brighter and happier as a flower does when we give it water.

Later when mother came home she was worried. Was this new way the right one? But by this time Abdul had Grandma on his side. Seri was still taking a little milk from her mother and in addition they went on giving her more drinks and food when she asked for it.

## ABDUL AND SERI (DIARRHEA)

When the diarrhea had stopped a day later, they gave Seri extra food to build up her strength as Abdul's teacher had told him to do.

Grandma was proud of Abdul. His new way seemed strange at first, but it had worked. Now Seri was better.

### ----SHOWD questions----

S = What do you **S**ee?  
 H = What is **H**appening?  
 O = Does this happen in **O**ur place?  
 W = **W**hy does this happen?  
 D = What will we **D**o about it?

**DISCUSSION:** (Use some of these questions, or add your own.)

- Would anyone like to retell the story of Abdul and Seri?
- What was wrong with Seri?
- What do you think of Grandma's advice to Abdul? What should they do for Seri?
- What do you do in your home when someone has diarrhea?
- How is your body like a plant? What happens to a plant when it does not have enough water?
- Why was Grandma hesitant at first to give Seri food or water?
- What convinced Grandma to try Abdul's new way?
- Do you know anyone who has been very sick or who has died with diarrhea?
- According to Abdul, what special drink could they mix up to give Seri?
- What should you do if the child vomits (throws up) when you give her liquids?
- What should you do if the diarrhea continues? Is it okay to give her food, like a cookie?
- What happened to Seri? Why did she get better?
- What would you do if your brother or sister had diarrhea?
- Divide into pairs to practice telling this story.
- Give out the coloring page, *How is your Body like a Flower?*
- During the week, tell your family, friends and neighbors the story of Abdul and Seri.

### Adapted from

UNESCO/ FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health). *Web Stories*. Available from:  
[http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=46812&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=46812&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Handout: *How is your Body like a Flower?*

This lesson is used in: Children—Physical—Health Stories and in Children—Physical—Diarrhea

How is your Body like a Flower?

