Treat infants and children with acute diarrhea and dehydration first with **oral rehydration therapy (ORT)**. ORT is one of the major worldwide health care advances. It is more effective, safer, less painful, and less costly than IV rehydration. The American Academy of Pediatrics, World Health Organization, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention all recommend ORT as the treatment of choice for most cases of dehydration caused by diarrhea (Churgay and Aftab, 2012b). **Oral rehydration solutions (ORSs)** enhance and promote the reabsorption of sodium and water, and studies indicate that these solutions greatly reduce vomiting, volume loss from diarrhea, and the duration of the illness. ORSs, including reduced osmolarity ORS, are available in the United States as commercially prepared solutions and are successful in treating the majority of infants with dehydration. Guidelines for rehydration recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics are given in Table 22-6.

TABLE 22-6
Treatment of Acute Diarrhea

Degree of Dehydration	Signs and Symptoms	Rehydration Therapy*	Replacement of Stool Losses	Maintenance Therapy
Mild (5% to 6%)	Increased thirst Slightly dry buccal mucous membranes	ORS, 50 ml/kg within 4 hours	ORS, 10 ml/kg (for infants) or 150 to 250 ml at a time (for older children) for each diarrheal stool	Breastfeeding, if established, should continue; give regular infant formula if tolerated. If lactose intolerance suspected, give undiluted lactose-free formula (or half-strength lactose-containing formula for brief period only); infants and children who receive solid food should continue their usual diet.
Moderate (7% to 9%)	Loss of skin turgor, dry buccal mucous membranes, sunken eyes, sunken fontanel	ORS, 100 ml/kg within 4 hours	Same as above	
Severe (>9%)	Signs of moderate dehydration plus one of following: rapid, thready pulse; cyanosis; rapid breathing; lethargy; coma	IV fluids (Ringer lactate), 40 ml/kg until pulse and state of consciousness return to normal; then 50 to 100 ml/kg or ORS	Same as above	