

What is diarrhea and acute gastroenteritis?

- Diarrhea and acute gastroenteritis is when your child has a case of vomiting and diarrhea.
- The symptoms do not last for over 8-12 hours.

What causes vomiting and diarrhea?

- Vomiting and diarrhea are common symptoms of many illnesses.
- Vomiting is usually caused by a virus or from eating food that doesn't sit well in the stomach.
- Your child may have vomiting and diarrhea at the same time or just one at a time.
- Some infants "spit up" after eating or burping. This is not vomiting.

Are vomiting and diarrhea contagious?

- Sometimes. Vomiting and diarrhea may be contagious, depending on the illness that causes them.

How are vomiting and diarrhea treated?

Controlling your child's intake of food and liquid can help stop his vomiting and diarrhea.

Vomiting

Most vomiting will stop within about 8-12 hours with the right care. Some doctors recommend using an oral rehydration solution (ORS) as described below. Other doctors recommend taking the following steps:

- Stop formula and breast feedings. Stop all liquids and solid foods in older children.
- Give frequent, small amounts of fluids. Give your child 1 ounce of clear liquids every hour. Have your child take small sips.
- Do not use plain water. Special clear liquids called oral rehydration solutions (ORS) are best.
- Some doctors say that children over 2 years old can have Gatorade, soda (caffeine free), clear soups, tea, Jell-o, and Popsicles. Ask your doctor.
- Do not give your child diet soda, sugar-free drinks, or caffeine.
- If your child doesn't vomit after 8-12 hours, add solid foods. For infants, try rice cereal with water or Pedialyte. For toddlers, try dry cereal, dry crackers, or dry toast.
- If your infant doesn't vomit after 12 to 24 hours, start breastfeeding or begin giving formula. Some doctors recommend giving half-strength formula for 12 hours, then full-strength after 12 hours. Ask your doctor.
- Add food and liquids slowly as your child is able to keep them down.

Diarrhea

- If there is diarrhea but no vomiting, it's usually okay to give your child milk.
- Feed your child a "B-R-A-T" diet for 1 or 2 days. It is made of bananas, rice (cooked white rice, rice cereal, rice cakes), applesauce, and tea or dry toast (no butter or jelly).
- Keep your child's diet bland until diarrhea is better. Plain pasta, baked chicken, boiled potatoes, cooked vegetables, and soups are good.
- Avoid spicy and fried food.
- If diarrhea doesn't get better, limit high-sugar foods like Kool-Aid and apple juice.
- Do not use over-the-counter medications until you have checked with the doctor.

Oral rehydration solution (ORS)

- Vomiting and diarrhea can cause dehydration (loss of fluid in the body).
- Your child should drink fluids if he has had vomiting and diarrhea. Drinking in small, frequent sips is best.
- Your child might need an ORS (such as Pedialyte) to help replace body fluids.
- Call the doctor to find out which ORS to use.
- Give your child the ORS in a dropper, spoon, or cup.
- If your child has diarrhea but no vomiting, don't limit how much ORS he drinks.
- The doctor can tell you the smallest amount of ORS that is okay to give your child.
- Wait 30-60 minutes after your child has last vomited to begin giving him the ORS. Give the ORS in small amounts and often (1 teaspoon a minute). Increase the amount slowly, as your child is able to keep it down.
- You can breastfeed and give formula while using the ORS.

When should I call the doctor?

If you have questions or concerns about your child's condition, call the doctor. If your child is very dehydrated, he needs immediate attention.

Call the doctor if...

- your child is under 6 months old and has a temperature above 104 degrees F (or 40 degrees C).
- your child is under 2 years old and has vomiting or diarrhea.
- stomach pain is not better in 2 hours, vomiting is not better in 12 hours, or diarrhea isn't better after 3 days.
- your child's mouth is dry, he is bloated, or he won't take liquids.
- there is blood in the vomit or diarrhea or bile (yellow-green liquid) in the vomit.
- your child has pain with urination, a bad headache, neck pain, or a strange rash.
- your child is unable to take the medicine he needs.

Go to the emergency room if...

- your child is very thirsty.
- your child doesn't urinate in 8-12 hours or if your infant doesn't urinate in 4-6 hours.
- urine is very dark.
- your child is sleeping a lot or has very little energy.
- there are no tears when your child cries.

Quick Answers

- Vomiting and diarrhea are symptoms of many illnesses.
- Vomiting and diarrhea are not contagious.
- If your child is vomiting, stop all food and liquids. After 30 minutes of not vomiting, begin to add food and liquids slowly as he is able to keep them down.
- Feed your child a bland diet if he has diarrhea.
- Vomiting and diarrhea can cause dehydration. Dehydration can be treated with an ORS.
- Call the doctor if vomiting, diarrhea, or aches and pains do not get better within reasonable time. Go to the emergency room if your child is very dehydrated.

References

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