

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: VOMITING AND DIARRHEA

What causes vomiting and diarrhea?

Vomiting (throwing up) and diarrhea (watery stools or poop) are often caused by a virus (a kind of germ). Although there is no medicine to cure these infections, your child's body should get rid of the virus in 7-10 days without having to go to a doctor or emergency room. During this time, you will need to make sure they don't lose too much body fluid.

Babies and young children can lose a lot of water and important salts when they are vomiting or have diarrhea. The loss of too much water and important salts is called dehydration, and this can be very serious for a baby or young child.

Taking care of your child at home

✓ My child is vomiting (with or without diarrhea)

Don't worry if your child vomits only once or twice. If they vomit a third time, follow these steps.

1. Check prescription medications

Call your doctor if your child is taking a prescription medication and throws up more than one dose.

2. Replace fluids using breast milk or oral rehydration solutions (ORS)

If you are breast feeding:

- Feed your baby for less time, more often. For example, if your baby usually nurses for ten minutes/side every three hours, try five minutes/side every hour and a half)
- Wait 30 minutes. If they vomit again, give one tablespoon of ORS every ten minutes.

If you are not breast feeding:

- Give your child or youth one tablespoon of ORS every ten minutes.



Do not give your child over-the-counter medicines to stop vomiting or diarrhea. These medicines stop your child's body from getting rid of the infection.

Staying hydrated with oral rehydration solutions (ORS)

ORS (like Gastrolyte® or Pedialyte®) are the only fluids you should use (besides breast milk) to replace fluids lost through vomiting and diarrhea. ORS are:

- made with the right balance of sugars, salts and water to replace the fluids lost from vomiting and diarrhea.
- available in most drug stores
- covered through the Ontario Drug Benefit plan for families receiving social assistance
- sometimes in powder form and must be mixed with water
- available in different flavours, and taste better cold, or made into popsicles. Ready-made popsicles are available in the CHEO pharmacy.

Speak to your nurse if the cost of ORS will be difficult for your family.

Remember: only breast milk and ORS should be given to hydrate your child. Do not give kool-aid, pop, sports drinks etc.

3. Treat fever

If your child or youth has a fever, help them feel more comfortable by giving acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®). **Do not give ibuprofen to babies under six months of age.**

4. Watch for dehydration

Babies under age 2 should have at least four wet diapers a day. Children older than age 2 should go pee 3-4 times per day.

5. Feed your child

If your child is old enough to eat solid foods they may not want to eat food for a few days. This is OK, as the most important thing is to keep them well hydrated. If your child is taking food, you can keep offering this. Most children will be back to their normal diet in a day or two.

✓ My child has diarrhea (without vomiting)

Diarrhea means watery stools (poop) that happen more often than usual. It takes a little time for the bowel to heal, so you might notice that your child's stools stay quite soft for up to ten days after the diarrhea. If diarrhea or cramping lasts after 5-7 days, your doctor may suggest lactose free milk for a little while.

The guidelines below are the same for children of any age.

1. Replace fluids using breast milk or oral rehydration solutions (ORS)

If you are breast feeding:

- Breast feed often to replace the fluids lost through diarrhea.
- If your child has started other foods, slowly begin to feed them their normal diet.

If you are not breast feeding:

- Slowly begin to give them their normal diet (like formula or milk).

Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department if your child:

- is three months old or younger, and has a fever (temperature higher than 38°C)
- is less than three months old and has had diarrhea for more than two days (48 hours)
- has a fever for more than two days (temperature higher than 38°C)
- has bloody or black stools (poop)
- vomits blood or green bile
- has diarrhea for more than ten days
- has abdominal pain that won't go away or is getting worse
- shows signs of dehydration (less than four wet diapers in 24 hours, dry mouth and tongue, sunken eyes or a sunken soft spot on the head, no tears when crying, grayish skin, very sleepy and hard to wake up)

