



Gastroenteritis: Vomiting and Diarrhea

Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of your stomach and intestines. Common causes are:

- Viruses.
- Food or water contaminated by bacteria or parasites.
- Reaction to a new food. Young children may develop signs and symptoms for this reason. Infants who are breast-fed may even react to a change in their mother's diets.
- Side effect from medications.

Characteristics signs and symptoms include:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Low-grade fever (sometimes)

Depending on the cause of the inflammation, symptoms may last from one day to more than a week.

If you suspect gastroenteritis in your child:

- Allow your child to rest.
- When your child's vomiting stops, begin to offer small amounts of an oral rehydration solution (CeraLyte, Enfalyte, Pedialyte). Don't use only water or only apple juice.
- Gradually introduce bland, easy-to-digest foods, such as toast, rice, bananas and potatoes. Avoid giving your child full-fat dairy products, such as whole milk and ice cream, and sugary foods, such as sodas and candy. These can make diarrhea worse.

- Consider acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) for relief of discomfort, unless your child has a liver disease. Don't give your child aspirin.
- If you're breast-feeding, let your baby nurse. If your baby is bottle-fed, offer a small amount of an oral rehydration solution (CeraLyte, Enfalyte, Pedialyte) or regular formula.
- The addition of a probiotic such as Florastor twice daily for 10 days may help thicken the stool by restoring the balance of intestinal flora.

Get medical help if your child:

- Becomes unusually drowsy.
- Vomits blood.
- Has bloody diarrhea.
- Shows signs of dehydration, such as dry mouth and skin, marked thirst, sunken eyes, or crying without tears. In an infant, be alert to the soft spot on the top of the head becoming sunken and to diapers that remain dry for more than three hours.
- Is younger than age 2 and has a fever that lasts more than one day or is age 2 or older and has a fever that lasts more than three days.