

Diarrhoea and Vomiting in Children 0-5 years

Advice and Prevention

Severe diarrhoea and vomiting can lead to dehydration which is when the body doesn't have enough water or the right balance of salts to carry out its normal functions. If the dehydration becomes severe it can be dangerous.

Most children with diarrhoea and vomiting get better very quickly, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice below:

If your child has signs of dehydration and

- Becomes unresponsive
- Has unusually pale or mottled skin
- Has cold extremities
- Is breathing faster than usual

**You need urgent help
Please phone 999 or go
straight to the nearest
Accident and
Emergency Dept.**

If your child

- Appears to be getting worse and you are worried
- Is not drinking
- Has signs of dehydration such as dry mouth, has not passed urine in the last 12 hours, is unusually sleepy or has sunken eyes
- Has blood in the stool (poo)
- Has had 6 or more bouts of diarrhoea in 24 hours or 3 or more vomits in 24 hours

Please ring your GP surgery/ Health Visitor or Community Nurse.

If your baby/child has been a patient in the last 48 hours, call CAU on the number you have been provided with.

Most children with diarrhoea and vomiting can be safely managed at home, however if your child:

- Is younger than one year, especially younger than six months
- Had a low birth weight
- Has stopped breastfeeding during illness
- Has signs of malnutrition

Please phone NHS Direct
0845 46 47
or www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
or phone one of the
useful numbers overleaf

How to manage your child at home:

- Diarrhoea can often last between 7 and 10 days
- Continue to offer your child their usual feeds, including breast or other milk feeds
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and offer small amounts often
- Do not give fizzy drinks and/or fruit juices
- You may be advised to give an Oral Hydration Solution
- If your child has other symptoms like a high temperature, neck stiffness, or rash please ask for advice from a health care professional
- Your child may have stomach cramps; if simple painkillers do not help please seek further advice
- If your child is due routine immunisations please discuss this with your GP practice or nurse, as they may not need to be delayed

How long will my child be ill?

- Diarrhoea usually lasts up to 10 days
- Vomiting usually does not persist for more than 3 days
- If your child's symptoms are taking longer than this you should contact a healthcare professional (numbers overleaf)

How to prevent dehydration

If your child has gastroenteritis but is not dehydrated:

- Keep feeding them as normal (for example breast milk) and offer plenty of drinks
- Fruit juice and fizzy drinks should be discouraged, because they can make diarrhoea worse
- Your healthcare professional, for instance your doctor may recommend that you give your child a special fluid known as Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS). This can help prevent dehydration from occurring. It is also used to treat children who have become dehydrated.
- You may be advised to give an Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) for up to six hours, after this time return to normal diet as tolerated

Keep the following items in your medicine cabinet ready for when you may need them:

- Paracetamol Suspension
- Ibuprofen Suspension (caution in asthmatics)
- Oral Rehydration Sachets

Remember to keep these in date and out of reach of children

Preventing the spread of Gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and vomiting)



Hand washing is the best way to help stop other people getting gastroenteritis. You and/or your child should wash your hands with soap (liquid if possible) in warm running water and then dry them carefully:

- After going to the toilet
- After changing nappies
- Before touching food



Your child **should not**:

- Share his or her towels with anyone
- Go to school or any other childcare facility until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting
- Swim in swimming pools until 2 weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped

Further Advice/Follow Up

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Some Useful Telephone Numbers

Health Visitor.....

Community Nurse (if applicable).....

NHS Direct.....0845 46 47

If you would like this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact NHS Norfolk on 01603 257006 and they will do their best to help.

