Vomiting and Diarrhea in Young Children

Vomiting and diarrhea can be upsetting for both you and your child, but fortunately, they are not usually dangerous.

If your child vomits, has diarrhea, or both, it is usually due to a stomach virus, sometimes called stomach flu. These viruses are different from the virus that causes the wintertime flu and are not affected by a flu shot. Sometimes a stomach virus also causes a fever. Food poisoning, or eating food contaminated with certain bacteria, can sometimes be the cause. Other times, vomiting and diarrhea occur because the child ate too much of a certain type of food.

Vomiting

Vomiting usually will stop within 24 hours, even though your child may feel very sick to his or her stomach (nauseated). Home treatment options depend upon your child’s age but the goal is the same: replace lost liquids with age-appropriate clear fluids.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>HOME TREATMENT FOR VOMITING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Babies 6 months and younger</td>
<td>• Do not feed for 5 to 10 minutes after vomiting.</td>
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<td>• If breastfeeding, offer shorter feedings more frequently.</td>
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<td>• If formula feeding, try smaller amounts of formula more often. If your baby is only fed formula and is not keeping anything down:</td>
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<td>– Switch temporarily to an ORS in a dropper, spoon, or bottle. Do not give your baby plain water.</td>
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<td>– Offer 1 tablespoon of the ORS every 10 minutes for the first hour. Then, if your baby keeps that down, offer 2 tablespoons every 20 minutes for the next hour. Gradually increase amount each hour your child does not vomit.</td>
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<td>– Return to regular feedings as soon as possible (within 24 hours).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older babies and children</td>
<td>• After 5 to 10 minutes have passed since your child last vomited, give 1 sip of appropriate clear liquid (see chart at bottom of page 2) every 5 to 10 minutes for 1 hour. Gradually keep increasing liquids as long as your child keeps them down.</td>
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<td>• Do not give your child any medicine to stop the vomiting unless we prescribe it.</td>
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<td>• When he or she is keeping fluids down, resume his/her regular diet as soon as possible.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Your child can usually return to daycare or school once it has been 24 hours since the last vomiting episode if he or she shows no other signs of illness.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Younger children need special attention when they vomit or have diarrhea because they can quickly become dehydrated. This is especially true for infants younger than 1 year old.

Watch for signs of dehydration:

• Urinating less than usual (fewer wet diapers)
• Less active than usual (sleeping more)
• Mouth and lips becoming dry
• Darker urine than usual

Younger children need special attention when they vomit or have diarrhea because they can quickly become dehydrated. This is especially true for infants younger than 1 year old.
**Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is when there is a sudden increase in the frequency of bowel movements, or the bowel movements are more watery and loose than normal.

Diarrhea may occur with vomiting, or it may be delayed 8 to 12 hours or more. Most cases of diarrhea will improve in 4 to 6 days and completely resolve in 2 weeks.

### Call the advice nurse if:
- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Your child has not urinated in the past 8 hours
- Breathing is faster or deeper than normal
- Vomit is green, black, red, or looks like coffee grounds
- Stool is red or black
- Your child is in severe pain
- Your child has a weak immune system (unvaccinated, HIV, sickle cell anemia, chemotherapy, etc.)
- Your baby is not yet 2 months old and has a fever of 100.4 or greater

If you have other questions or concerns, please call the advice nurse.

### AGE | HOME TREATMENT FOR DIARRHEA
---|---
**Up to 1 year**
- **If feeding well and not dehydrated:**
  - Offer breast milk or formula more often than usual to replace lost fluids.
- **If signs of dehydration develop:**
  - Give oral electrolyte solution (ORS) like Pedialyte or Enfalyte in addition to regular feedings.
  - Do not stop other solids unless diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting. Offer your baby easily digestible foods (cereals, bananas) if he or she was eating solids before.
  - Protect the diaper area with either zinc oxide cream (like Desitin) or petroleum jelly.

1 year and older
- **If drinking well and not dehydrated:**
  - No change to diet required; offer more clear fluids throughout the day in addition to normal foods.
- **If signs of dehydration develop:**
  - Drink lots of age-appropriate clear liquids (see chart below).
  - Do not stop all foods, but consider smaller meals with easily digestible foods (cereal, starches, cooked vegetables, rice).
  - Avoid foods high in sugar, fat, or any foods that seem to make your child’s diarrhea worse.
  - Probiotics (like Culturelle) or yogurt may also help.

### Which clear liquid can I give my child?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>BEST CHOICE</th>
<th>NEXT BEST OPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0 to 2 months</strong></td>
<td>Oral rehydration solution (ORS) like Pedialyte</td>
<td>None. Only oral rehydration solution is a safe alternative to breast milk or formula at this age.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **3 months to 3 years** | ORS (like Pedialyte) | If your child normally eats solid foods (baby or table foods) and refuses to take ORS, any fluid normally taken by your child is better than no fluid at all.  
- Water + splash of juice or clear, colorless soda (ex: 7-Up, Sprite)  
- Juice popsicles  
- Low-sugar sports drink WITHOUT caffeine (like G2 or Gatorade)  
- Milk (for a child older than 1 year)  
- Water as a last resort |
| **3 years or older** | ORS (like Pedialyte) or low-sugar, caffeine-free sports drink (like G2 or Gatorade) | If your child refuses to take ORS or sports drink, any fluid normally taken by your child is better than no fluid at all.  
- Water  
- Water + splash of juice or clear, colorless soda (ex: 7-Up, Sprite)  
- Juice popsicles  
- Milk |

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