

# Children's Medical Group



## Vomiting and Diarrhea

Vomiting and diarrhea are common childhood illnesses. They can occur separately, or at the same time. Diarrhea is an unusual increase in the number of stools (or bowel movements) per day or an increase in the looseness or amount of water in the stool. Diarrhea is most commonly caused by a viral infection of the intestinal tract. However, infants and young children can have more frequent or more loose stools for other reasons, including viral upper respiratory infections (e.g. colds or ear infections) or inability to digest certain foods or drinking too much juice. Diarrhea caused by an intestinal virus usually clears up after 5 to 7 days. The treatment of vomiting and diarrhea is aimed at preventing your child from becoming dehydrated while he/she naturally recovers from the infection. Antibiotics are not helpful in treating virus-caused diarrhea. Other medicines such as Kaopectate or Lomotil, medicines which slow down the diarrhea, can make the infection last longer and make your child more ill.

### Treatment of Vomiting

Frequently vomiting and diarrhea occur together. Treat the vomiting first and then follow instructions for diarrhea.

1. Do not give any fluids (including water) or solids for 2-4 hours after the last episode of vomiting. This is important.
2. After the initial 2 to 4 hours of stomach rest, start clear liquids very slowly. For infants use pedialyte 1/2 oz. every 20 minutes. For toddlers 1 oz. of pedialyte or Gatorade. For older children, Gatorade, Popsicles, flat pop and soup broth. Repeat the small amount every 20 minutes.
3. If your child keeps the liquid down after the first hour, double the amount and continue offering every 20 to 30 minutes. You can continue to double the amount every hour.
4. If your child starts vomiting again, wait an additional 2 to 4 hours and try again. If this fails please call the office.

**Note: Trying to hurry the process by offering your child liquids or solids too soon or too much will only cause the vomiting to return.**

5. Once your child has kept down liquids for about 4 hours you may start bland foods like crackers, cereal, toast, rice, non-citrus fruits like bananas and apples (applesauce), mashed potatoes, spaghetti, vegetables and soup. It is best to give smaller amounts more

frequently. After 2-4 hours of keeping down bland foods, your child may return to a regular diet, including milk products. If diarrhea is present see below.

### **Treatment of Diarrhea**

The main goal of treatment is to keep your child well hydrated. This can best be accomplished by adjusting your child's diet.

1. Breast fed infants: Continue breast-feeding and give your baby extra liquids like pedialyte and juice.
2. Other infants and children: If your child is vomiting follow the above vomiting guidelines first. The current recommendation for treatment of diarrhea is to continue giving solid foods and to offer additional liquids. The best fluid to prevent dehydration is pedialyte. Gatorade can be substituted for toddlers and older children. If your child has blood or mucous in the stools please call us. For most children with diarrhea, stopping milk products is not necessary.
3. Foods like bananas, rice cereal, applesauce, toast, boiled rice or spaghetti, cooked carrots, crackers and cereal will help the stools firm up quicker.
4. If the diarrhea lasts longer than seven days please call the office.

### **Dehydration**

The major problem with vomiting and diarrhea is dehydration. This happens when someone loses more fluids than he/she takes in. If your child develops signs of dehydration he/she needs to be seen by us.

#### **Signs of Dehydration**

- \* Dry tongue, lips or inner cheek
- \* No tears when crying
- \* No urine for 10-12 hours
- \* Sunken eyeballs or fontanel (soft spot)
- \* Listlessness (very sleepy)

### **Other Associated Problems**

If your child has any of the following, he/she should be seen:

- \* Severe stomachache or headache
- \* Blood in vomit or stool
- \* Very irritable or fussy
- \* Temperature greater than 103 (greater than 100.5 in infants less than 2 months old) by rectal temp.
- \* Earache
- \* Diarrhea which is not better in 7-10 days
- \* Child not better after 24-48 hours if on a special diet
- \* Diarrhea is severe (one bowel movement an hour for several hours)
- \* Confusion

- \* Listless or very sleepy
- \* Continuous vomiting without diarrhea
- \* Head injury

### **Diaper Rash from Diarrhea**

When stool contacts the skin, the skin can become irritated and red. As you might expect, when an infant or young child has diarrhea, a skin rash frequently develops on the child's buttocks. To protect your child's skin, wash it after each bowel movement, dry it well and cover it with a thick layer of Vaseline or A and D ointment. This protection is especially important at night or during naps when diapers are changed less often. Call our office if your baby's bottom is developing raised red spots or blisters.

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