



Diarrhoea and Vomiting in Children

When young children (under five years old) suddenly begin to have diarrhoea this is usually caused by an infection in the gut. This illness is known as gastroenteritis.

Most children with gastroenteritis get better quickly without treatment. You will normally be able to look after your child safely at home.

Severe diarrhoea and vomiting can lead to dehydration. If the dehydration becomes severe it can be dangerous. Children at risk of dehydration include: young babies, children who haven't been able to drink enough during their illness and children whose diarrhoea and vomiting has become severe.

Contact your healthcare professional or GP if your child develops any of the symptoms of dehydration listed below:

- Seeming unwell.
- Being unusually irritable or lethargic.
- Passing less urine than normal.
- Pale or mottled skin.
- Cold hands and feet.

How to Prevent and Manage Dehydration at Home

1. If your child has gastroenteritis but is not dehydrated, keep feeding them as normal (for example breast milk) and offer plenty of drinks.
2. Your doctor or nurse may recommend that you give your child a special fluid known as ORS (Oral Rehydration Salt Solution). ORS can help prevent dehydration from occurring. Make up the ORS according to the instructions on the packet. Give your child frequent, small drinks of ORS.
3. Your child may vomit a little when they start to drink ORS.



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4. Contact a healthcare professional if your child keeps vomiting or will not drink the solution.
5. If you are not breastfeeding, don't give your child any other drinks unless your healthcare professional tells you it is ok to do so.
6. Your child should not eat solid food until they are rehydrated.
7. It usually takes about four hours to complete rehydration.

Going to Hospital

Your child may need to go to hospital if they won't drink the ORS, or keep being sick, or if the dehydration is severe, or if the healthcare professional is concerned.

Caring for your Child after Rehydration

- Your child can start to eat solid food straight away.
- Your child should drink plenty of their usual fluids. This should include breast or other milk feeds or Oral Rehydration Fluid.

How long will my Child be Ill?

Diarrhoea often lasts for five to seven days and, in most children, it will stop within two weeks. Vomiting often lasts for one to two days and, in most children, it will stop within three days. If your child's symptoms are taking longer to get better, you should contact a healthcare professional.

Preventing the Spread of Gastroenteritis

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.



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- 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 two weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped.

Further Advice / Instructions

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Please retain this leaflet for future reference.



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For further advice or information you can telephone your local Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Chippenham Community Hospital

Rowden Hill
Chippenham
SN15 2AJ
Tel: 01249 456 403/4
Open: 07:00 to 23:00; seven days a week

Trowbridge Community Hospital

Adcroft Street
Trowbridge
BA14 8PH
Tel: 01225 711 329
Open: 07:00 to 23:00, seven days a week

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net.

Document Control

Division: Unscheduled Care
Department: Emergency Department
Approved Date: June 2019
Next Review Date: July 2022
Document Number: USC - PIL0066