

**Diarrhoea and vomiting is common in young children. Also known as a stomach or tummy bug, it's usually caused by an infection.**

Most babies and toddlers who have diarrhoea and vomiting don't need treatment and you can safely look after them at home. However, it's important to look out for signs of dehydration.

Babies and toddlers can become dehydrated more quickly than older children when they have diarrhoea and vomiting. If dehydration becomes severe it can be dangerous, particularly in young babies.

It's also important to be careful with hygiene while your child is ill to stop diarrhoea and vomiting spreading.

#### *Looking after a baby or toddler with diarrhoea and vomiting*

- Carry on offering babies their usual milk feeds. Bottle fed babies can also have drinks of water between feeds. Keep giving them formula at the usual strength – never water it down.
- Toddlers over one can have other drinks, such as full-fat cows' milk, but avoid fruit juice and fizzy drinks as these can make diarrhoea worse.
- If your child is having solid foods, offer them food as usual if they seem to want it.
- If you wish, you can give your baby oral rehydration salt (ORS) solution to help prevent dehydration. This is available from your pharmacist.

**If you are worried about your child, you can speak to your GP, health visitor or pharmacist, or call NHS 111 for advice.**

#### **When to get medical advice**

Vomiting usually lasts for 1-2 days, while diarrhoea lasts for about 5-7 days. If your child's symptoms last longer than this, or if they are showing signs of dehydration, speak to your GP.

Your child may be dehydrated if they have:

- **sunken eyes**
- **in young babies, a sunken soft spot (fontanelle) on their head**
- **few or no tears when they cry**
- **a dry mouth**
- **fewer wet nappies**
- **dark yellow urine**

#### **When to get medical help urgently**

Get medical advice urgently if your child

- seems to be deteriorating rather than getting better
- has a temperature of over 38C (100.4F) for a baby less than three months old, or over 39C (102.2F) for a baby aged three to six months old. (Over six months a child's temperature isn't the most useful indicator of how seriously ill they are.) Read more about how to take your baby's temperature.
- has blood or mucus in their poo
- has bile-stained (green) vomit
- has severe abdominal pain

**Gastroenteritis is a very common condition that causes diarrhoea and vomiting. It's usually caused by a bacterial or viral tummy bug.**

It affects people of all ages, but is particularly common in young children. Most cases in children are caused by a virus called rotavirus. Cases in adults are usually caused by norovirus (the "winter vomiting bug") or bacterial food poisoning. Gastroenteritis can be very unpleasant, but it usually clears up by itself within a week. You can normally look after yourself or your child at home until you're feeling better.

#### *Symptoms of gastroenteritis*

The main symptoms of gastroenteritis are:

- sudden, watery diarrhoea
- feeling sick
- vomiting, which can be projectile
- a mild fever

Some people also have other symptoms, such as a loss of appetite, an upset stomach, aching limbs and headaches. The symptoms usually appear up to a day after becoming infected. They typically last less than a week, but can sometimes last longer.

#### Looking after a child with gastroenteritis

You can look after your child at home if they have diarrhoea and vomiting. There's not usually any specific treatment and your child should start feeling better in a few days.

You don't normally need to get medical advice unless their symptoms don't improve or there's a risk of a more serious problem (see Getting medical advice for your child).

To help ease your child's symptoms:

- **Encourage them to drink plenty of fluids.** They need to replace the fluids lost from vomiting and diarrhoea. Water is generally best. Avoid giving them fizzy drinks or fruit juice, as they can make their diarrhoea worse. Babies should continue to feed as usual, either with breast milk or other milk feeds.
- **Make sure they get plenty of rest.**
- **Let your child eat if they're eating solids and feel hungry.** Try small amounts of plain foods, such as soup, rice, pasta and bread.
- **Give them paracetamol if they have an uncomfortable fever or aches and pains.** Young children may find liquid paracetamol easier to swallow than tablets.
- **Use special rehydration drinks made from sachets bought from pharmacies if they're dehydrated.** Your GP or pharmacist can advise on how much to give your child. Don't give them anti-diarrhoeal and anti-vomiting medication, unless advised to by your GP or pharmacist.

Babies and young children, especially if they're less than a year old, have a greater risk of becoming dehydrated.

#### When to get medical help urgently

Call NHS 111 or your GP if you're concerned about your child, or they:

- have symptoms of dehydration, such as passing less urine than normal, being unusually irritable or unresponsive, pale or mottled skin, or cold hands and feet
- have blood in their poo or green vomit
- are vomiting constantly and are unable to keep down any fluids or feeds
- have had diarrhoea for more than a week
- have been vomiting for three days or more

- have signs of a more serious illness, such as a high fever (over 38C or 100.4F), shortness of breath, rapid breathing, a stiff neck, a rash that doesn't fade when you roll a glass over it or a bulging fontanelle (the soft spot on a baby's head)
- have a serious underlying condition, such as inflammatory bowel disease or a weak immune system, and have diarrhoea and vomiting

### **How to stop diarrhoea and vomiting spreading**

#### **Make sure you and your child wash your hands regularly while your child is ill and keep them away from school or nursery until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have cleared**

- Make sure everyone in the family washes their hands frequently, preferably using liquid soap with warm running water. They also need to dry their hands properly.
- It's particularly important for everyone to wash their hands after going to the toilet or changing a nappy and before eating.
- Anyone who has diarrhoea and vomiting should have their own towel to use.
- Babies or children who have diarrhoea and vomiting should be kept away from childcare or school for at least 48 hours after the last bout of diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Babies or children shouldn't swim in public swimming pools for two weeks after diarrhoea and vomiting has stopped.
- Take extra care when travelling to parts of the world with poor sanitation, as you could pick up a stomach bug. For example, you may need to boil tap water before drinking it.

Young children can have the rotavirus vaccination when they're two to three months old, which can reduce their risk of developing gastroenteritis.

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*At Brinsworth Whitehill Primary School we aim to create a supportive learning environment where everyone is encouraged to grow, develop and achieve their full potential*