

DEFINITION

Vomiting is a forceful ejection of a large portion of the stomach's contents through the mouth. The usual reasons that infants/children vomit are a viral infection or reflux. Most of the time, excessive vomiting is expected to resolve within 24-48 hours.

Diarrhea is both an increase in the frequency, and looseness of bowel movements. Mild diarrhea is only a few loose, mushy stools. Moderate diarrhea is more watery stools, and severe diarrhea is a significant increase of stools more than twice the regular diaper changes. The color of the stools is usually not any indicator of the severity of the diarrhea.

As with vomiting, diarrhea is usually caused by a viral infection. Occasionally, it may be caused by bacteria or parasites; or by excessive fruit juices, such as apple juice. Unlike vomiting, diarrhea will usually take longer to resolve, and may last from several days to a week.

The main complication of severe vomiting and diarrhea is dehydration from excessive loss of bodily fluids. Signs of dehydration that parents can look out for are a dry mouth, the absence of tears, and a decrease in the frequency of urination (infants not urinating within 6-8 hours, toddlers/children within the last 10-12 hours).

GENERAL HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS**Clear Fluids for First 8 Hours.**

Offer your infant/child small amounts of clear fluids. It is best to use an oral maintenance fluid such as Pedialyte or Infalyte. Please do not use dilute kool-aid, home rice water, weak tea, or jello water.

If your child is older than 24 months, you may also use Gatorade (can mix with flat Sprite for taste.) If you choose Sprite, you may consider stirring until no fizz remains since the bubbles may inflate the stomach and increase the chances of continued vomiting.

Start with 1 teaspoon (5 ml) every 10 minutes. If your child tolerates this amount without vomiting, you may double the amount each hour. If your child continues to vomit, stop for an hour and then restart. This one-swallow-at-a-time approach rarely fails.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR INFANTS**Formula After 8 Hours.**

If your baby has tolerated the one-swallow-at-a-time approach for 8 hours, then you may restart his regular formula. If the diarrhea is severe and persistent, then you may try a soy formula for the next several days. Soy formulas do not contain the same milk sugar, lactose, which is found in cow's milk formula. After a bout of severe diarrhea, the intestinal tract may be depleted of the enzyme, lactase, which helps to digest the sugar, lactose. The intestinal tract will be replenished with a normal supply of lactase in a few days, so returning to a regular cow's milk formula is not a problem. The taste in a soy vs. cow's milk formula is not very different, so your baby should tolerate the brief change in formulas.

For Breastfed Babies.

The key to treating vomiting and diarrhea is to breastfeed in smaller amounts than usual. If your baby has vomited only once or twice, you may continue to breastfeed on one side for approx. 10 minutes. If your baby does not continue to vomit after 8 hours, you may return to both sides.

If your baby has vomited for more than three times, you will need to use the one-swallow-at-a-time approach with an oral maintenance fluid.

Bland Foods After 8 Hours.

If your baby has been on solids, you may start with foods such as applesauce, strained bananas, or rice cereal. Try a few teaspoons at a time, and smaller feeds more frequently.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TODDLER/CHILD

Bland Foods After 8 Hours.

After 8 hours without vomiting, your child can gradually return to a normal diet. During this time, your child does not need milk of any kind for about 48 to 72 hours. You may continue using clear fluids, but remember to avoid fruit juices. Offer small amounts of food, more often than usual.

Day 1: Clear fluids and Pedialyte popsicles. If no further vomiting, try saltine crackers, rice, cereal, mashed potatoes.

Day 2: Bland soups, applesauce, toast with honey, carrots, or other high-fiber foods, bananas or fresh fruit. (not canned with sugar)

Day 3: Lean meats, noodles, soft cooked vegetables, and active culture yogurt. The active culture yogurt contains *Lactobacillus* organisms that will digest the milk sugar, lactose. May add dairy products as tolerated.

Day 6: Regular diet.

Offer Probiotics.

Purchase over the counter **Lactobacillus acidophilus** and add to cereal, food, or milk.

OTHER CONCERNS

Common Mistakes with Infants. Clear fluids alone should only be used for 8-24 hours, since clear fluids do not supply the calories that your baby needs. Likewise, you should not continue using a diluted formula for more than 24-48 hours. It is okay to use a half-strength formula for the first feeding after clear liquids, but please remember to advance to a three-quarters strength after your baby tolerates 2-3 half-strength feeds. After the first 24-48 hours, your baby should be back to full-strength formula.

Diaper Rash from Diarrhea. The skin near your baby's anus may become irritated from the diarrhea stools. Wash off the diarrhea with a warm wash cloth using water only. Some of the diaper wipes have chemicals that may continue

to irritate the sensitive skin. Then, protect the skin with a layer of ointment such as Zinc Oxide, A&D Ointment, or Bag Balm.

Prevention among All Ages. Viral diarrhea is very contagious. Good hand washing is crucial for keeping everyone in the family from getting diarrhea.

WHEN TO CALL OUR OFFICE

Immediately

- Your child does not urinate in more than 10 hours.
- Crying does not produce tears.
- Inside of the mouth is dry rather than moist.
- Any blood in the vomitus or diarrhea.
- Any possibility of poisoning with a plant, medicine, or chemical.
- Your child has severe stomach pain.
- Your child is difficult to wake up or seems confused.

Regular Hours

- If the vomiting continues for more than 12 hours.
- Mucus or pus appears in the stool.
- A fever over 101.2° F / 38.5° C for more than 72 hours.
- Diarrhea does not improve after 48 hours on the recommended diet.
- Mild diarrhea lasts more than 1 week.