

IS MY CHILD SICK - Vomiting

VOMITING

- Vomiting is the forceful emptying (throwing up) of a large portion of the stomach's contents through the mouth
- Nausea and abdominal discomfort usually precede each bout of vomiting

Causes

- Main cause: stomach infection (gastritis) from a stomach virus (e.g., Rotavirus). The illness starts with vomiting but diarrhea usually follows within 12-24 hours.
- If vomiting persists as an isolated symptom (without diarrhea) for more than 24 hours, more serious causes must be considered.

Severity of Vomiting

The following is an arbitrary attempt to classify vomiting by risk for dehydration:

- MILD: 1 - 4 times/day
- MODERATE: 5 - 10 times/day
- SEVERE: Vomits everything or nearly everything
- Severity relates even more to the length of time that the particular severity level has persisted. At the beginning of a vomiting illness (especially following food poisoning), it's common for a child to vomit everything for 3 or 4 hours and then become stable with mild or moderate vomiting.

Return to School

Your child can return to day care or school after vomiting and fever are gone.

Call 911 Now (your child may need an ambulance) If:	Call Us Now (night or day) If:	Call Us Within 24 Hours If:	Call Us During Weekday Office Hours If:	Parent Care at Home If:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unresponsive or difficult to awaken • * Not moving or too weak to stand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child looks or acts very sick • Confused (delirious) • Stiff neck or bulging soft spot • Headache • You suspect poisoning with a plant, medicine, or other chemical • Signs of dehydration (e.g., very dry mouth, no tears and no urine in more than 8 hours) • Blood in the vomit that's not from a nosebleed • Bile (bright yellow or green) in the vomit • Abdominal pain is also present (EXCEPTION: abdominal pain or crying just before and improved by vomiting is quite common) • Fever over 104° F (40° C) and not improved 2 hours after fever medicine • Age under 12 weeks with fever above 100.4° F (38.0° C) rectally (Caution: Do NOT give your baby any fever medicine before being seen.) • Age under 12 weeks with vomiting 2 or more times (EXCEPTION: spitting up) • Age under 12 months old who has vomited Pedialyte (or other brand of ORS) 3 or more times and also has watery diarrhea • Receiving Pedialyte (or clear fluids if age over 1 year old) and vomits everything over 8 hours • High-risk child (e.g., diabetes mellitus, abdominal injury, head injury) • * Vomiting an essential medicine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You think your child needs to be seen • Has vomited over 24 hours • * Fever present for more than 3 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have other questions or concerns • * Vomiting is a recurrent chronic problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • * Mild vomiting (probably viral gastritis) and you don't think your child needs to be seen

Article Information Courtesy of Dr. Barton D. Schmitt

Barton Schmitt, M.D. is professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He is Medical Director of the After-Hours Call Center at The Children's Hospital of Denver that covers calls for over 320 pediatricians and 100 family physicians throughout Colorado and Wyoming. He is the author of books/information sheets for parents, and telephone triage books/software for physicians.

IS MY CHILD SICK - Vomiting

HOME CARE ADVICE FOR VOMITING

Reassurance:

- Most vomiting is caused by a viral infection of the stomach or mild food poisoning.
- Vomiting is the body's way of protecting the lower GI tract.
- Fortunately, vomiting illnesses are usually brief.

For Bottled Infants Offer Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) for 8 Hours:

- ORS (eg. Pedialyte or the store brand) is a special electrolyte solution that can prevent dehydration. It's readily available in supermarkets and drug stores
- For vomiting 1 or 2 times, offer ½ strength formula for 2 feedings, then regular formula.
- For vomiting over 2 times, offer ORS for 8 hours. If ORS not available, use formula. Spoon or syringe feed small amounts: 1-2 teaspoons (5-10 ml) every 5 minutes.
- After 4 hours without vomiting, increase the amount.
- After 8 hours without vomiting, return to regular formula.
- For infants over 4 months old, also return to cereal, strained bananas, etc.
- Normal diet OK in 24-48 hours.

For Breastfed Infants, Reduce the Amount Per Feeding:

- If vomits once or twice, nurse 1 side every 1 to 2 hours.
- If vomits over 2 times, nurse for 4 to 5 minutes every 30 to 60 minutes.
- If continues to vomit, switch to ORS for 4 hours.
- Spoon or syringe feed small amounts of ORS: 1-2 teaspoons (5-10 ml) every 5 minutes.
- After 4 hours of ORS, return to regular breastfeeding. Start with small feedings of 5 minutes every 30 minutes and increase as tolerated.

For Older Children (over 1 Year Old) Offer Small Amounts of Clear Fluids For 8 Hours:

- Water or ice chips are best for vomiting in older children. (Reason: Water is directly absorbed across the stomach wall)
- **EXCEPTION:** also has diarrhea. ORS: Vomiting with watery diarrhea needs ORS. If refuses ORS, use ½ strength Gatorade.
- Give small amounts: 2-3 teaspoons (10-15 ml) every 5 minutes.
- Other options: ½ strength flat lemon-lime soda, popsicles or ORS frozen pops.
- After 4 hours without vomiting, increase the amount.
- After 8 hours without vomiting, add solids:
- Limit solids to bland foods for 24 hours.
- Start with saltine crackers, white bread, cereals, rice, mashed potatoes, etc.
- Normal diet OK in 24-48 hours.

Avoid Medicines:

- Discontinue all nonessential medicines for 8 hours (reason: usually make vomiting worse).
- Fever: Fevers usually don't need any medicine. For higher fevers, consider acetaminophen (Tylenol) suppositories. Never give oral ibuprofen; it is a stomach irritant.
- Call your doctor if: vomiting an essential medicine.

Sleep:

- Help your child go to sleep for a few hours. (Reason: Sleep often empties the stomach and relieves the need to vomit). Your child doesn't have to drink anything if he feels very nauseated.

Contagiousness:

- Your child can return to day care or school after vomiting and fever are gone.

Article Information Courtesy of Dr. Barton D. Schmitt

Barton Schmitt, M.D. is professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He is Medical Director of the After-Hours Call Center at The Children's Hospital of Denver that covers calls for over 320 pediatricians and 100 family physicians throughout Colorado and Wyoming. He is the author of books/information sheets for parents, and telephone triage books/software for physicians.

IS MY CHILD SICK - Vomiting

Expected Course:

- Vomiting from viral gastritis usually stops in 12 to 24 hours. If diarrhea is present, it usually continues for several days.

Call Us If:

- Vomiting becomes severe (vomits everything) over 8 hours
- Vomiting persists over 24 hours
- Signs of dehydration
- Your child becomes worse

And Remember, Call 513-244-5959 If Your Child Develops Any Of The "When To Call Us" Symptoms.

Article Information Courtesy of Dr. Barton D. Schmitt

Barton Schmitt, M.D. is professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine. He is Medical Director of the After-Hours Call Center at The Children's Hospital of Denver that covers calls for over 320 pediatricians and 100 family physicians throughout Colorado and Wyoming. He is the author of books/information sheets for parents, and telephone triage books/software for physicians.