



# DIARRHOEA & VOMITING – BABIES & CHILDREN





***All about...***

## **DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING: BABIES & CHILDREN**



**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 Chemist.

## 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.

## Signs of dehydration in a baby or toddler

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 baby or toddler:

- 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

## How to rehydrate your child with ORS solution

If your baby becomes dehydrated, they will need to be rehydrated with oral rehydration salt (ORS) solution, which is available from your pharmacist or GP. They will explain how to use it.

The ORS solution helps replace the water and salts lost from your child's body because of the diarrhoea and vomiting.

To rehydrate your baby or toddler, you need to offer them small amounts of ORS solution frequently over a period of about four hours.

If your child is breastfed, keep offering them breastfeeds as well. If your child isn't breastfed, don't offer them any other drinks apart from the ORS solution unless a health professional suggests it

Don't offer your child any food while they are having the ORS solution.

If your baby or toddler keeps vomiting the solution back up or won't drink it, speak to your GP.

Don't give your child anti-diarrhoea drugs unless advised to by a health professional.

## **Caring for your child once they're rehydrated**

Once your child is rehydrated, they can start to eat solid food again. Offer them plenty of their usual drinks, including milk feeds, but avoid fruit juice or fizzy drinks

If your child has more episodes of diarrhoea you may be advised to give them some ORS solution after each bout

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

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