

# PARENT EDUCATION

## Vomiting and Diarrhea

July 12, 2010

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Vomiting and diarrhea can be a frequent and unpleasant occurrence during childhood. They have different causes. The most common cause is a viral infection (gastroenteritis) which is a self-limited infection that resolves spontaneously in few days. The goal is to give your child's stomach a temporary rest and still provide adequate fluids to avoid dehydration. In short order, the virus or bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract that caused this unpleasant episode will disappear. Parents need to monitor important signals such as temperature and check for signs of dehydration.

Diarrhea in infants can be infectious or non-infectious. Non-infectious causes includes overfeeding, food intolerance, or antibiotics. Infectious causes includes viral infections and bacterial infections and is often accompanied by a low grade fever. Infants have low fluid reserves, and should be watched carefully for dehydration. Diarrhea is very irritating to the infant's skin. Wash diaper area after each stool with soap and water, and use an ointment such as Zinc Oxide or A & D ointment to protect the skin.

Diarrhea in children also has infectious and non-infectious causes. Children have better fluid reserves, but they should also be watched for dehydration. It's OK to take the child's temperature rectally during a bout of diarrhea. If the child is old enough, you may take it orally.

Mild diarrhea is less than ten watery stools a day, less than five days, and without bloody stools and signs of dehydration. It usually is treated at home by parents. Signs of severe diarrhea include > 10 stools/day, > 5 days, bloody stools, and dehydration.

### MANAGING VOMITING AND DIARRHEA:

- 1). DO NOT give over the counter medications for diarrhea unless prescribed by your doctor
- 2). If the child or infant is vomiting stop all drinking and feeding for two hours to give the stomach rest. After this resting period start clear fluids in small frequent amounts for 6-12 hours. Fluids in infants includes Pedialyte, Ricelyte, or any other oral rehydration solution. Fluids for older kids include Koolaid, Gatorade, Seven up, Ginger ale, or any other sports drink. Do not give milk, water, citrus juices, apple juices, tea or cola.
- 3). If the child is not vomiting start the clear liquids immediately.
- 4). In infants, and after 6-12 hours, start Isomil DF or if not available start any lacto-free or soy formula, unless the infant is allergic to soy. If the infant is allergic to soy start the formula he or she was on before the vomiting/diarrhea started. You may also give rice cereal for infants.

- 5). In older kids and after 6-12 hours start BRAT diet. It includes bananas, rice, apples, applesauce (but not apple juice), toast(dry), crackers, graham crackers, mashed potatoes and dry cereal. Stay away from milk and dairy products (except yogurt), and fatty food. Yogurt is the best thing to give during vomiting and diarrhea as it helps in clearing the infection.
- 6). Fluids are best tolerated at room temperature. Not too cold, and not too hot.
- 7). The main exception to the above instructions is a breast feeding infant for whom you should continue ' breast feeding without interruptions, but more frequently.
- 8). Watch for dehydration signs:
  - Dry pale skin.
  - Dry tongue, lips and mouth.
  - Dry eyes, sunken eyes and crying without tears.
  - Child is listless and hard to awaken
  - Weakness or thirst
  - Sunken fontanel in infants
  - Child is breathing fast, and no urine for 8-10 hours.
- 9). Call your doctor if :
  - The infant is less than 6 months old.
  - The infant has a high fever more than 102.5 or fever more than 4 days.
  - Diarrhea persists more than ten days.
  - Blood in stools.
  - Unable to keep even clear liquids down for more than 12 hours.
  - Has signs of dehydration.
  - Vomiting does not stop or begins again when food is given.
  - Blood-tinged vomit.
  - Vomiting and fever without diarrhea.