
Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is usually caused by a stomach virus or a disagreeable food. It is characterized by vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, and sometimes fever.

Vomiting – Vomiting is usually short-lived, 8 to 24 hours. Treatment is as follows:

1. Rest the stomach completely for 30 minutes to one hour. If during night, wait until the morning to begin feedings.
2. Start with clear fluids; glucose-electrolyte formulas such as *Pedialyte* are best. Give in small amounts at frequent intervals, starting as low as 1 teaspoon every 2 minutes, if necessary. For older children, 1 ounce every 15 minutes is reasonable. If vomiting recurs, start again with step 1. Serve all fluids at room temperature.
3. After 6 hours without vomiting, gradually return to solids and the normal diet (see below).
4. Medicine should be avoided for the first 8 hours. If only nausea is present, *Emetrol* (over-the-counter) can be used.
5. If vomiting does not stop with the above steps, please call our office. For cramps, a heating pad or warm bath will work best.

Diarrhea - Diarrhea is an increase in the number of stools and an increase in their fluid content. It may last several days to even weeks in infants. Treatment is as follows:

1. If vomiting also, follow the instructions listed above.
2. If there is significant diarrhea, use a glucose-electrolyte solution (such as *Pedialyte* or *Ricelyte*) to replace lost fluid and to keep up with the continuous loss. If your child refuses these, try diluting with a sports drink. Do not use cola, milk, undiluted fruit

juices, or undiluted sports drinks.

3. If the stools are just loose, use normal fluids in larger amounts.
4. Gradually return to a normal diet. The best foods to use are rice, wheat, potatoes, bread, cereals, lean meats, yogurt, vegetables, and fruits. Avoid fatty foods and foods high in simple sugars such as sweetened tea, juices, and soft drinks.
5. Approximately 20% of individuals will be temporarily lactose intolerant and should use lactose-free products. Those who are not affected can drink milk.
6. Over-the-counter medications are generally not recommended in children, as there is no proof of efficacy. Side effects including lethargy and respiratory depression can occur. Discuss with your doctor as to their use in individual cases. *Lactobacillus* - sold as *Lactinex* granules, or *Danactive* - made by Dannon, may be useful.



Call the office if:

1. Signs of dehydration occur - no urine, dry mouth, no tears, or difficulty rousing.
2. Vomiting continues over 12 hours in a six month-old or younger, or 24 hours in a 2 year-old or younger.
3. Diarrhea is greater than one occurrence per hour.
4. Blood appears in the vomitus or stools.
5. Abdominal pain is present continuously for over 2 hours.
6. If there has been a poison, medication, or injury that might be causing the pain.
7. Any other symptoms concern you.