

## Causes

Most diarrhea in children is caused by a viral infection (stomach flu) which often also cause fever and vomiting. The diarrhea usually goes away without any treatment within 7 days.

## Symptoms

Diarrhea is the passage of watery or very frequent stools. Sometimes stools will be yellow or green—this should not cause any worry. If due to a virus, fever for the first 3 days is common. Often the child with diarrhea might feel bad and have a decreased appetite, but they usually do not look very ill.

## Treatment

Common mistakes include stopping all feedings, giving the wrong type of fluids, or giving anti-diarrhea medicines. Anti-diarrhea medicines are usually not helpful and have lots of side effects. Call us before giving any medicine for diarrhea. Treatment for diarrhea depends on the severity of the symptoms.

**Mild Diarrhea**—continue with your child’s regular diet. If your baby is breast feeding or on formula, continue the breast feeding or formula. If your baby is on solid foods, continue with the solid foods. For older children, try to avoid fried or high fat foods and foods with lots of sugar (Jell-O, ice cream, sweetened cereals). Good food choices include cereal, crackers, oatmeal, vegetables, fresh fruits (especially bananas), yogurt, and boiled chicken without the skin.

**Moderate Diarrhea**—special “oral rehydration solutions” have been developed just for such illnesses and they work amazingly well. The most widely available solutions are Pedialyte® and Infalyte®, but other brands appear to work just as well. Plain water lacks the sugar and salts that are necessary for good rehydration. Other fluids such as soft drinks, juices, and sports drinks have too much salt and sugar and can worsen diarrhea. If vomiting develops, see the other side of this page.

Children with moderate diarrhea need at least twice as much fluid as they usually drink. For example, a 1-year-old should drink at least four ounces an hour for the first six hours. Allow your child to drink as much of the oral rehydration solution as he wants. Do not keep a child on oral rehydration solution for more than a day. Returning to a normal diet as soon as possible is very important.

**Severe Diarrhea**—call me if severe diarrhea or any of the signs listed below develops.

For vomiting or diarrhea, call the office if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- A baby under 1 month old vomits more than once.
- Your child does not urinate for more than 8 hours or does not produce tears when crying.
- Blood appears in the vomited material that is not clearly from a nose bleed.
- Abdominal pain lasts for more than 4 hours or your child becomes confused or difficult to awaken.
- You suspect poisoning from bad food, a plant, medicines, or chemicals.
- Your child looks unusually ill or you are worried about him.
- Blood or pus appears in the stools.