

Causes

Most vomiting in children is caused by viral infections of the stomach (stomach flu). Diarrhea often develops after the onset of vomiting during a stomach flu. Vomiting can also be caused by your child eating something that irritates the stomach. Though parents often worry about it, food poisoning is an uncommon cause of vomiting.

Symptoms

Vomiting is different from regurgitation or reflux. Vomiting is the forceful ejection of a large portion of the stomach contents. It is usually accompanied by nausea and abdominal discomfort. In contrast to this, reflux is the effortless spitting up of one or two mouthfuls of stomach contents. Reflux is commonly seen in babies less than one year old. Vomiting from a stomach flu usually stops after 12 to 24 hours.

Treatment

Common mistakes include giving a child all the fluid he wants all at once or forcing a child to drink when he is not thirsty. Medicines for vomiting often have bad side effects and usually do not help. The treatment of vomiting depends on the child's age:

Breast Fed Infants—try to supply breast milk in smaller amounts and at more frequent intervals than usual. If baby vomits twice, nurse on only one side at a time for 10 minutes. After 8 hours without vomiting, return to nursing on both sides on demand. If baby vomits three or more times, nurse for 5 minutes every 30-60 minutes. If vomiting continues, put him on an oral rehydration solution (like Pedialyte[®]) by bottle. When he goes 4 hours without vomiting, retry the feedings as outlined above. Infants who are on baby foods may return to eating rice cereal after 8 hours and may return to a normal diet in 24-48 hours.

Bottle Fed Infants—if baby vomits two or more times, offer about a teaspoon of an oral rehydration solution (Pedialyte[®]) every 10 minutes. After four hours without vomiting, you may increase to amount of each feed. After eight hours without vomiting, return to formula feeds. Infants who are on baby foods may return to eating rice cereal after 8 hours and a normal diet in 24-48 hours.

Children over 1 year old—offer clear liquids in small amounts at frequent intervals (every 10 minutes). Water, ice chips, popsicles, and clear soda with the fizz stirred out of it are okay, but no milk. For children 1-6 years old, start with a tablespoon at a time. For school-aged children, start with an ounce at a time. After four hours without vomiting, you may double the amount of fluid given each time. If vomiting returns, rest the stomach for one hour then restart with the small amounts. After eight hours without vomiting, you may start bland foods like saltine crackers, toast with honey, bland soups (chicken noodle or chicken with rice), mashed potatoes, rice, or skinless boiled chicken. After 24 hours without vomiting, your child can return to a normal diet.

See the back of this page for **Warning Signs** that signal trouble or that you should call our office.

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.