

Vomiting and Diarrhea

Vomiting and diarrhea occur in children for many reasons. Most commonly, they occur as symptoms of gastroenteritis ("stomach flu" or "intestinal flu"). The illness usually lasts one to four days and is often accompanied by stomachache and fever. Our main concern in gastroenteritis is prevention of dehydration.

General Treatment:

* When a child begins to vomit, it is best to withhold all solids and liquids for the first complete 8 hours. In an infant or very young child, allow only very small sips of clear liquids during this time. Clear liquids (Infalyte, Pedialyte, Gatorade, flat soft drinks) are excellent fluids for small infants. These should be given in small amounts, such as one to two ounces per hour. If the child does not begin vomiting again, the amounts can gradually be increased for the next 24 hours. Soup, toast, crackers, and formula may be offered 8-12 hours after vomiting stops. Then you may advance as tolerated. If the vomiting persists, call our office.

* Diarrhea may accompany vomiting or occur alone. When diarrhea begins, milk, dairy products, and solid foods should be discontinued. The child should be allowed only clear liquids for 16-24 hours. Simple solid foods, such as rice, cereal, bananas, toast, or crackers may be added on the second day. Milk and dairy products usually should not be added until the third or fourth day; however, normal feeding may begin after vomiting has stopped. As a child recovers, his bowel movements may not be formed for many weeks.

* As long as a baby has a moist mouth and tongue, cries tears, and is voiding two to three times per day, he is not dehydrated.

Note to Breast Feeding Mothers: Breast feeding usually can be continued in gastroenteritis. Frequent short feedings (5-10 minutes of each breast) are helpful if baby is vomiting. Regularly spaced feedings are appropriate if the baby has diarrhea. Extra fluids may be given between breast feedings such as Infalyte or Pedialyte, if diarrhea is excessive.