

VOMITING AND DIARRHEA

Most cases of vomiting and/or diarrhea are caused by a viral infection and will go away without specific treatment. Vomiting usually lasts less than one day. Diarrhea can last up to a week.

The main goal of treatment for both symptoms is to prevent dehydration.

The primary treatment of both diarrhea and vomiting is dietary. For vomiting, the most important treatment is clear liquids. In infants this means an oral rehydration fluid such as Pedialyte® unless your baby is breast feeding. Breast-fed babies should continue to breast feed unless the vomiting is very severe and prolonged. Older children should be given flat soda, juice, popsicles, or jello. Milk is often best avoided, as it tends to make the vomiting worse. If your child is doing a lot of vomiting, it might help to wait an hour or two before giving fluids to give the stomach a "rest." It is important to start with small amounts of liquids every ten or fifteen minutes. If the child holds down this amount, you can gradually increase the volume with subsequent feedings. The most common mistake that parents make is to not give fluids to a vomiting child. This will only make it more likely that your child will get dehydrated. Once your child has gone eight hours without vomiting, it is safe to try some bland solid foods such as crackers, toast and rice.

The treatment of diarrhea also involves frequent fluids to make up for losses in the diarrhea. Apple juice and milk are best avoided, as they will often make diarrhea worse. Once vomiting has stopped certain solid foods will be helpful in stopping the diarrhea. The diet is known as the BRAT diet for Bananas, Rice or Rice cereal, Apple sauce and Toast. Other binding foods include boiled or mashed potatoes and pasta.

There is almost never a reason to use medication of any kind in the treatment of diarrhea or vomiting in children. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can be used to treat your child's fever or pain if it exists in addition to these symptoms. Acetaminophen is available as a suppository (Feverall®) for those who can't keep it down.

Signs of dehydration in children:

- Dry mouth or lips
- No tears when crying
- Urinating less than every 6 hours
- Sunken eyes, they look 'hollow'
- Marked lethargy, if your child is extremely tired and 'just can't move'

If your child has any of the above symptoms, call us to discuss possible dehydration. Please call also if your child has blood in the stool or vomit, a stiff neck, a severe headache, severe abdominal pain or if he or she is difficult to waken.