



Vomiting

Patient and Family Education

What is vomiting?

Vomiting (throwing up) happens when the stomach pushes its contents up through the mouth. It has many causes. The most common cause is a virus.

What problems can vomiting cause?

The real danger of vomiting is that it can cause your child to become dehydrated (dried out). Your child may also have a mild fever or diarrhea (loose or frequent stools). A child with vomiting, fever and diarrhea may become dehydrated more quickly.

What is dehydration?

Dehydration happens when the body loses too much water. Signs of dehydration include such things as:

- No urine in six hours in an baby younger than 12 months old
- No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 12 months old
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes
- Dry lips and mouth

What is the treatment for vomiting?

The goal of treatment is to keep your child from getting dehydrated. Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Some children need to rest their stomach for a brief time (15-30 minutes) after they vomit. If this is true for your child:
 - Rest the stomach for 15-30 minutes after your child vomits the **first time only**. Then try to give him small amounts (1 tsp. every 5 minutes) of **clear fluids** for 20-30 minutes.
 - If your child is able to keep this down, increase the amount to 2-3 teaspoons every 10-15 minutes.
 - If your child keeps the fluids down, gradually increase the amount.
 - Double the amount each hour until your child is taking as much as he wants.
- If your child continues to vomit while giving him clear fluids, give him smaller amounts of fluid more often. Then, work back up to larger amounts again.
- After your child is able to keep down clear liquids for 6-8 hours, gradually give him foods that he usually eats. Avoid fatty, fried or spicy foods such as ice cream, French fries and pizza.
- After 12-24 hours without vomiting, gradually increase his diet to a normal diet.
- Do not give your child Pepto Bismol, Immodium, Kaopectate or other similar types of medicines.

What are clear fluids?

- Clear fluids that help to replace salt and sugar in the right amount include:
 - Give babies less than 6 months old ½ strength Lytren, Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Infalyte **or a less costly store brand**. (½ drink and ½ water)
 - Give babies and children over 6 months old 1/3 strength **Endurance** Gatorade (1 cup Endurance Gatorade to 2 cups water) or ½ strength G-2 (half water and half drink) to drink.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Vomiting, continued

- If your baby or child has **both** vomiting and diarrhea, do not use the sports-type drinks. Instead use only ½ strength Lytren, Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Infalyte **or a less costly store brand.** (½ drink and ½ water). For babies over 6 months of age and children who do not like the taste, try the flavored products.
- Do not use **just** water for a baby less than 12 month of age unless told to do so by your child's doctor.
- If your baby takes formula and is taking clear fluids well for 6 to 8 hours, give him his usual formula just start slowly by giving small amounts.
- For all babies and children:
 - Do not give diet drinks, fruit juices, carbonated drinks, sodas, tea or water.
 - Avoid red colored drinks that may look like blood in the stool.

What do I do if my baby is breast-fed?

- If your baby has vomited only once or twice:
 - Continue breast-feeding.
 - Limit total nursing time or nurse on only one breast each feeding.
 - After 4 hours without vomiting, nurse as usual.
- If vomiting occurs three or more times:
 - Pump your breasts over the next 24 hours and give your baby controlled amounts of fluids.
 - Or, put your baby on clear fluids as directed above.
 - After 4 hours without vomiting, return to your regular nursing schedule.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has one or more of the following:

- He does not smile or play for even a few minutes every 4 hours.
- If your child has problems keeping any fluids down, or vomits more than 8 times in less than 8 hours.
 - For babies less than 6 months old – if his vomiting is not better in 12 hours.
 - For babies over 6 months old and children – if his vomiting is not better in 24 hours.
- His vomit becomes green.
- His vomit has blood in it or looks like “coffee grounds”.
- You see signs of dehydration (drying out):
 - No urine in six hours in an baby younger than 12 months old
 - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 12 months old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- He seems to be breathing hard or fast even after the fever has been treated with medicine.
- He becomes weak, sluggish or looks or acts sick.
- Stomach pain that continues between vomiting episodes.
- Regular pain or crying that reoccurs with or without vomiting.

Also call your child's doctor if you have questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

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