

Facts about Vomiting

Vomiting is most often caused by a virus.

Bacteria, parasites, foods that are hard to digest and other things, such as stress or even car travel, may also cause a child to vomit. Vomiting may also be a sign of other infectious or serious non-infectious illness, such as appendicitis.

Vomiting can be harmful to a child because of the danger of dehydration. Dehydration occurs when too much fluid is lost from the body. Children who are vomiting must drink enough fluids so they don't become dehydrated. (see: Feeding a Child Who is Vomiting, page 23)

How is Vomiting Spread?

Germs that cause vomiting spread easily from person to person and especially from child to child through contact with feces, contaminated surfaces or in food or water. To stop the spread, wash your hands and the child's hands carefully after every diaper change. Make sure that children wash their hands after using the toilet. Wash hands before preparing or eating food.

Refer to Guidelines for Cleaning Spills of Blood & Body Fluids on page 14



Signs of Dehydration

- decreased urination (fewer than 4 wet diapers in 24 hours)
- increased thirst
- no tears
- dry skin, mouth and tongue
- fast heart beat
- sunken eyes
- greyish skin
- sunken soft spot on baby's head



What to Do at Home

- Make sure everyone in the house, including your child, washes their hands after using the toilet and after diaper changes.
- Wash hands often and always before preparing or eating food.
- Use a different towel, facecloth, dish, spoon, etc. for each person to stop the germs from spreading.



When to Call Your Doctor or 811

Call your doctor right away if your child is vomiting and has **any signs of dehydration or the following:**

- has stomach pain that is severe and does not stop
- is bringing their knees up to their stomach and crying
- has fast breathing
- is under 6 months of age
- refuses to drink
- has a temperature of 38.5° C or higher
- is very sleepy or fussy
- has severe head or neck pain
- has green vomit
- has blood in the vomit or in diarrhea
- is still vomiting after 4 – 6 hours

Facts about Vomiting continued

Feeding a Child Who is Vomiting

Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about what to feed a child who is vomiting. Here are some suggestions:

If your child is less than 6 months old:

- Avoid giving plain water to an infant under 1 year of age, unless your doctor specifies an amount.
- Offer your child small amounts (2 – 3 teaspoons) of an oral rehydration solution, such as Pedialyte™ or Pediatric Electrolyte, every 15 – 20 minutes. (See Note on Oral Rehydration Solutions).
- Gradually increase the amount of solution, if your infant is able to keep it down without vomiting.
- Do not give your infant more fluid than he or she would normally eat. This will overfill an irritated stomach and may lead to more vomiting.
- If your child is breastfeeding, breastfeed for a total of 5 – 10 minutes every two hours.
- If your infant is under 1 month of age and is vomiting (not just spitting up), call your doctor right away.

If your child is 6 months to 1 year old:

- Avoid giving plain water to an infant under 1 year of age, unless your doctor specifies an amount.
- Offer your child small amounts (2 – 3 teaspoons) of an oral rehydration solution, such as Pedialyte™ or Pediatric Electrolyte, every 15 – 20 minutes. Infants over 6 months of age may prefer flavoured oral rehydration solution.
- Gradually increase the amount of solution, if your infant is able to keep it down without vomiting.
- Do not give your infant more fluid than he or she would normally eat. This will overfill an irritated stomach and may lead to more vomiting.
- After your infant goes 8 hours without vomiting, slowly reintroduce formula. Start with small amounts (1 – 2 ounces) offered often, and slowly work up to your baby's normal feeding routine. You can also offer soft, bland foods such as bananas, cereals or crackers.

If your child is over 1 year old:

- Give clear liquids in small amounts (2 teaspoons – 2 tablespoons) every 15 minutes. Clear liquids include ice chips or sips of water, flavoured oral rehydration solution or frozen oral rehydration popsicles.
- If your child vomits, give smaller amounts of fluid, every 15 minutes.
- Once your child has stopped vomiting for 8 hours, offer bland foods such as crackers, mashed potatoes, rice or mild soups (noodles are okay).
- If your child has not vomited for 24 hours, slowly resume your child's regular diet.

Note: Oral Rehydration Solutions

Oral rehydration solutions are exact mixtures of water, salts and sugar. They help replace lost fluids. These solutions can be absorbed even when your child is vomiting. They come in different flavours. You can buy a ready-to-use liquid, a powder that must be mixed with water, and frozen popsicles. Offer small amounts often, using a spoon or dropper for infants. Do not use oral rehydration solutions as the sole source of fluid for more than 12-24 hours.

Sports drinks, such as Gatorade™, contain more sugar than a child needs and may make diarrhea, which often accompanies vomiting, worse.

If you have any questions about oral rehydration solutions, talk to your doctor.

Do not give your child any medicine unless your doctor suggests it.