

Emergency Services

Vomiting or Diarrhea - Children

Vomiting is a normal reaction of the stomach trying to get rid of contents irritating it.

Vomiting can happen without warning.

Sometimes a child can have diarrhea and/or a fever as well as the vomiting.

Vomiting usually lasts for a day or two and goes away on its own.

Diarrhea is when your child has bowel movements often and these movements are loose or liquid.

Diarrhea usually lasts 2 to 3 days, but can last up to 10 days.

Vomiting or diarrhea can be serious because they can cause dehydration (sounds like *dee-hi-dray-shun*). Dehydration is when your body loses water, salt and minerals.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at www.HealthLinkBC.ca.

When to see your family doctor

See your family doctor if your child shows any of these signs of dehydration:

- No urine in eight hours (For babies, the diaper is dry for more than 8 hours)
- No tears when crying
- Dry lips, tongue or mouth
- Drowsy, sleepy, or unusually quiet
- For babies, a sunken fontanelle (the soft spot on the top of your infants head)

Also see your family doctor if your child shows any of these signs:

- Your child passes stool that has blood in it or looks black like tar.
- Your child has vomit that is green, yellow, or red in colour.
- Your child has a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F) for more than 48 hours, even with giving medicine for the fever.
- Your child continues to vomit for more than 24 hours.
- Your child has diarrhea that lasts more than 4 days.
- Your child complains of a pain in the abdomen that is worse with activity. An infant may scream and draw his or her legs up to the abdomen.

Vomiting or Diarrhea - Children - *continued*

How to care for your child at home

Children with vomiting or diarrhea can be easily cared for home. The goal is to keep your child well hydrated until the vomiting or diarrhea goes away.

To keep a child 6 months or older hydrated

- Pedialyte or Gastrolyte are the best drinks. If your child does not like the taste of Pedialyte, you can give watered-down sugar-free fruit juice (1 cup of juice to 4 cups of water).
- Give your child small amounts of fluid often (even when vomiting). Large amounts of fluid can make diarrhea or vomiting worse. The following chart is a guide for how much fluid to give your child every 15 minutes (or at least within every hour).

	How much	How often
6 to 12 months	5 mLs (1 tsp)	Every 15 minutes
1 to 5 years	10 mLs (2 tsp)	Every 15 minutes
5 years and older	15 mLs (3 tsp)	Every 15 minutes

To keep a child less than 6 months hydrated

- If breast feeding, continue to breastfeed. Just shorten the time on the breast and feed more often.
- If formula feeding, continue with normal strength formula.
- **Do not** give your child Koolaid, pop, or other sugary drinks. Drinks with lots of sugar can make diarrhea worse. Juice is okay if it is diluted.
- **Do not** give milk until your child has stopped vomiting for 24 hours. It is okay to start giving milk even if your child still has diarrhea. Some children stop digesting the sugar in milk while they are sick.

After 6 to 8 hours of no vomiting, it is okay to start giving food

- Feed your child small amounts of foods that are easy to digest such as:
 - Pabulum
 - Rice
 - Plain noodles (no sauce)
 - Crackers
 - Plain toast
 - Mashed potatoes

It is okay to start with solid foods even if your child continues to have diarrhea.

Let your child rest

- Quiet activities and sleep help your child recover faster.
- When sleeping, wake your child every hour to give fluids.

Care for your child's skin

Diarrhea can make your child's bottom red and sore.

- Change dirty diapers right away.
- Gently clean your child's bottom with mild soap and water after each bowel movement.
- Apply zinc oxide cream to help protect the skin.

Prevent the spread of infection

- Wash your hands after handling dirty diapers.
- Wash your hands before you touch food.
- Help your child wash his or her hands after using the toilet and before touching food.