

Vomiting and Diarrhea in Children

Vomiting or throwing up is a normal reaction of the stomach trying to get rid of contents that irritate it. Sometimes a child can have diarrhea and/or a fever as well as vomiting. Vomiting usually lasts for 1 or 2 days 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 and 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.

How to care for your child at home

Prevent the spread of germs

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

Keep your child hydrated

Children with vomiting and/or diarrhea can be easily cared for at home. The goal is to keep your child well hydrated.

To keep a child less than 6 months hydrated

- Continue to feed your baby their normal diet (breast milk or formula). Shorten the times of the feed and feed more often.
- **Do not** give your baby water. This can cause low salt and sugar in the blood.

To keep a child 6 months or older hydrated

- Give your child small amounts of fluid often (even when vomiting). Large amounts of fluid can make diarrhea or vomiting worse if given all at once. The following chart is a guide for how to give fluids based on your child's age.

Age	How much	How often
6 to 11 months	5 mLs (1 tsp)	Every 5 minutes
1 to 5 years	10 mLs (2 tsp)	
6 years and older	15 mLs (3 tsp)	

- Pedialyte or Gastrolyte are the best drinks. If your child does not like the taste of Pedialyte, you can give watered-down fruit juice (example: ½ cup apple juice, ½ cup water).
- **Do not** give your child Gatorade, Kool-Aid, pop, or other sugary drinks. Drinks with lots of sugar can make diarrhea worse.
- **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.

Vomiting and Diarrhea in Children - *continued*

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, crackers, rice, plain toast, plain noodles, or 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 water or baby wipes after each bowel movement.
- Diaper rash creams or ointments can help protect the skin. Look for creams with zinc in it to treat more severe diaper rash.

Anytime you have questions

- Speak with your family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Contact Fraser Health Virtual Care and speak to a registered nurse by phone or live chat.
Open 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., 7 days a week
Phone: 1-800-314-0999
Chat: fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare

When to get medical help

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

- No urine (pee) in 8 hours - For babies, this means the diaper is dry for more than 8 hours.
- No tears when crying
- Dry lips, tongue, or mouth
- Drowsy, sleepy, or unusually quiet
- Sunken soft spot (fontanelle) on the top of the head - for babies

See your family doctor or nurse practitioner if your child shows any of these signs:

- Your child passes stool that has blood in it or looks black like tar.
- Your child's 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 throw up for more than 24 hours.
- Your child has diarrhea for more than 4 days.
- Your child complains of a pain in their stomach that gets worse with activity. Babies might scream and draw their legs up towards their abdomen.

- Call HealthLinkBC and speak to a registered nurse. Available in 130 languages.
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Phone: 8-1-1 (7-1-1 TTY)
Online resources: HealthLinkBC.ca

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www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.