

Emergency Services

Vomiting or Diarrhea (Adult)

Vomiting

There are many reasons why a person throws up or vomits. The most common reason is from a stomach virus (which is often called the 'stomach flu' by mistake – The real flu usually does not cause vomiting).

How to take care of yourself at home

- **Rest.** If you do not rest and limit your activity, you can feel sick and throw up more.
- **Stay hydrated.** This means you need to drink liquids such as water, flat ginger ale (without the fizz), broth, clear juices, and weak tea.
- Take small sips often. Do not drink a whole glass at once.
- Try drinking liquids that are at room temperature or warm. This can help settle your stomach.
- **After the vomiting has stopped, eat small amounts of plain, bland foods for the first 24 hours.** Start with foods that are easy to digest such as soda crackers, plain toast, and gelatine desserts (such as Jell-O). If you feel okay eating these foods, try eating cereal, plain rice, noodles, soup, and eggs.
- Do not eat fatty or spicy foods.
- **Take medicines as directed by the doctor.** Some medicines for vomiting can make you very sleepy.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea usually lasts for a couple of days but can last for longer. It depends on what caused the diarrhea.

When you have diarrhea, you lose a large amount of water and salts. If not treated properly, you can become very dehydrated.

How to take care of yourself at home

Follow the instructions for vomiting as well as what is listed here.

- **Rest.**
- **Stay hydrated.**
- **Eat small amounts of plain, bland foods for the next 24 hours.** Start with foods that are easy to digest (see under Vomiting).
Certain foods and drinks can make your diarrhea worse.
For a few days:
 - **Do not** eat dairy products (such as milk, cheese, and yogurt).
 - **Do not** eat foods high in fibre (such as whole grains, fruits with skins, raw vegetables).
 - **Do not** eat fatty or spicy foods.
 - **Do not** drink coffee, colas, or alcohol.
- **Stop the spread of germs.** Wash your hands often. Always wash your hands for at least 45 seconds after using the toilet.
Do not let others use your towel.

Vomiting or Diarrhea (Adult) - *continued*

When to call your family doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department

- You have vomited for longer than 24 hours.
- Your vomit has blood in it or looks like coffee grounds.
- You have very bad belly (abdominal) pain or rectal pain that does not go away.
- You have a bad headache and stiff neck, especially if you have never had a headache like it before.
- You have a signs of dehydration:
 - dry mouth
 - very dark amber urine (pee)
 - very little or no urine
 - feeling very dizzy or lightheaded
 - blacking out or passing out
- You have a fever over 38.5 C (101.3 F).
- Your diarrhea lasts longer than 3 days.
- Your bowels movements have blood in them or they become black and look like tar.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

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