

A Guide For Parents and Carers

Gastroenteritis

What is Gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis (“gastro”) is a bowel infection causing diarrhoea and sometimes vomiting. Diarrhoea means runny, watery bowel motions. The vomiting may settle quickly, but the diarrhoea can last up to ten days. In most cases no medicines are needed. Babies under 6 months can become ill very quickly with gastro because of the loss of fluid.

Treatment

Children with mild gastro can be looked after at home. The main

treatment is to keep your child drinking fluids that are needed to replace fluid lost due to the vomiting and diarrhoea. It is important for the fluids to be taken even if the diarrhoea seems to get worse.

Do not give medicines to reduce the vomiting and diarrhoea. They do not work and may be harmful.

Give small amounts of clear fluid often. A mouthful every 15 minutes is best if your child is vomiting a lot.

Key points to remember about gastroenteritis

- Young babies and children can become dehydrated very easily – they need small amounts of fluid often
- Babies under 6 months with gastro may need to be checked again by your doctor after 6 – 12 hours
- Often babies drink every time they vomit. Keep breastfeeding. If bottle feeding, do not stop formula for more than 12 – 24 hours
- Give older children one cup (150 – 200ml) of fluid for every big vomit or case of diarrhoea
- Continue to give food if your child wants to eat. Do not stop food for more than 24 hours
- Your baby or child is infectious so wash your hands well with soap and warm water, particularly before feeding and after changing nappies
- Keep your child away from other children as much as possible until the diarrhoea has stopped

Care at home

Infant Feeding

If you are breastfeeding, continue to do this but feed more often. You can give Gastrolyte as well. If bottle feeding, give Gastrolyte or clear fluids for the first 12 hours, then give normal formula in small, but more frequent amounts.

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Clear Fluids

Your child must keep drinking clear fluids. Gastrolyte and Repalyte are different types of oral rehydration fluid that replace fluids and body salts. They can be bought at the chemist but if not available, give your child other clear fluids listed below. For a baby up to 9 months cooled boiled water should be used to dilute the drinks listed.

Clear Fluid

Gastrolyte (different flavours are available)

Sugar solution (sucrose)

Cordial (not low calorie)

Lemonade (not low calorie)

Fruit juice

Warning: The drinks must be diluted with water as they contain too much sugar. Too much sugar for a young baby which can make the diarrhoea worse.

Dilution

Make up exactly as it says on the packet.

1 teaspoon of table sugar to 1 cup water

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cordial to 4 cups of water

1 cup to 4 cups water

1 cup to 4 cups water

Food

Your child may refuse food at first. This is not a problem as long as clear fluids are taken. Doctors now suggest there is no need to restrict food. Generally, if your child is hungry at any time, give them the food they feel like eating. Do not stop food for more than 24 hours.

Come back to this surgery or hospital if:

- Your child is not drinking and still has vomiting and diarrhoea
- Your child has a lot of diarrhoea (8-10 watery motions, or 2 or 3 large motions per day) or diarrhoea continues after 10 days
- Your child is vomiting frequently and seems unable to keep any fluids down
- You think is dehydrated eg. not passing urine, pale and lost weight, sunken eyes, cold hands and feet, or hard to wake up
- Your child has a bad stomach pain.

OR you are worried for any other reason.

Doctor's name from this consultation: _____

Hours of opening:

After hours number: