

Children's Emergency Department

Gastroenteritis: Parent/Carer Discharge Information



Gastroenteritis is a common infection of the intestines that may cause vomiting, diarrhoea or both. Viruses are the commonest cause, bacterial infections and food poisoning being less common. Gastroenteritis normally starts with vomiting that lasts 1-2 days, followed by diarrhoea lasting 2-3 days, although stools/poo can remain loose for up to 10 days. The stools/poo are frequent, loose and watery. The main worry is that the loss of fluid, sugar and salts from your child's body could result in dehydration which can be very serious. Babies under the age of 6 months are most at risk. Some children may suffer cramping tummy pain and fever, both of which are usually worse in bacterial infections. Children may be distressed through hunger, thirst, fever or pain and may well wish to sleep more than normal. Please be aware that babies dehydrate rapidly and easily.

What should I do now?

- Do not give drugs to stop the vomiting and diarrhoea; these may be harmful.
- If your baby is bottle-fed give Dioralyte for the first 12-24 hours. Recommence usual milk feeds in smaller more frequent amounts once vomiting stops. If breastfeeding then feed more frequently and give Dioralyte. Dioralyte replaces the water, sugar and salts lost and can be bought at supermarkets and chemists. Follow instructions on the packets.
- Offer your child small amounts of clear fluids. You can use diluted apple juice or Dioralyte often: a mouthful every 10-15 minutes. This will not stop the vomiting and diarrhoea but will stop your child becoming dehydrated. Beware: fizzy drinks or undiluted fruit juice can worsen diarrhoea.



Patient Information

- Start your child on a dry diet for example toast or biscuits and if tolerated milk can be reintroduced. They should restart their normal diet within 48 hours even if diarrhoea continues.
- Remember gastroenteritis is infectious: make sure your family wash hands after changing nappies, using the toilet and before eating.

Return to school/activity

Do not let your child mix with other children until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea.

When should I seek medical advice?

- If your child shows signs of dehydration such as being more sleepy than normal, sunken eyes, dry mouth and tongue, passing little or no urine (dry nappies) and will not drink/vomits all fluids taken or has cold hands or feet.
- If your child has worsening tummy pain/diarrhoea or blood in the diarrhoea.
- If your child is under 6 months of age and/or you are concerned.

For further advice/information

- Call 111 (24 hours a day)
- Contact your GP

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

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