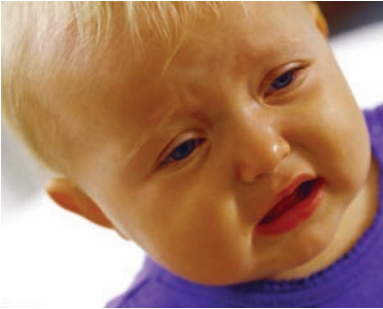


# Vomiting and Diarrhea in Children



## How do I know if it's serious?

If your child vomits or has diarrhea, it may be because he or she has caught a stomach virus (stomach flu). Stomach flu typically causes vomiting, and this is often followed by diarrhea. However, the diarrhea may be delayed for 8 to 12 hours or even longer. Sometimes, only vomiting occurs and there is no diarrhea.

Other times, vomiting and diarrhea occur because the child ate too much of a certain type of food. An infant's digestive system cannot always handle large amounts of juice, fruit, or even milk.

Regardless of the cause, infants and young children need special attention when they vomit or have diarrhea because they can quickly become dehydrated. This is especially true for infants younger than 1 year old.

## Home treatment for vomiting

### Babies up to 6 months

- Do not feed your baby anything for 30 to 60 minutes after he or she has vomited. Watch your baby closely for signs of dehydration.
- Do not give your baby plain water.
- If your baby is breastfed, offer short but frequent feedings.
- If your baby is fed formula, switch to an oral electrolyte solution. Offer 1 table-spoon every 10 minutes for the first hour, and double the amount every 20 minutes each hour that your child does not vomit. You can return to regular feedings once 6 hours have passed without your child vomiting.
- Offer oral electrolyte solution (such as Pedialyte™) in a dropper, spoon or bottle.

### Children 7 months through 3 years

- After 1 hour since your child last vomited, give 1 ounce of clear liquid (not plain water) every 20 minutes for 1 hour. Double the amount every 20 minutes each hour that your child does not vomit.
- Offer your child:
  - diluted juice
  - electrolyte solution
  - clear broth
- Do not give sports drinks, undiluted fruit juice, or soda.
- After 6 hours with no vomiting, offer your child regular foods. Avoid high fiber foods and foods with a lot of sugar.

## Home treatment for diarrhea

### Babies up to 1 year

- If your baby is breastfed, try to breast-feed more often throughout the day so lost fluids can be replaced. If your baby

is formula-fed, try giving your baby more bottles throughout the day.

- If signs of dehydration develop, give your child an oral electrolyte solution (such as Pedialyte). Give the electrolyte solution in addition to regular feedings. You can give the oral electrolyte solution a little at a time in a dropper, spoon, or bottle. Do not give oral electrolyte solutions as the only source of fluids for more than 12 to 24 hours.
- Do not give your baby sports drinks, juice, or soda. These drinks contain too much sugar and not enough minerals (electrolytes) that are being lost.
- Offer your baby easily digestible foods (cereal, strained bananas, mashed potatoes) if he or she was eating solid food before.
- Protect the baby's diaper area with Desitin™, Diaparene™, A & D ointment™, or zinc oxide cream.

### Children 1 year through 11 years

Give 1/2 cup to 1 cup of a children's oral electrolyte solution, or plain water (if child is eating food) each hour. Encourage your child to drink often to prevent dehydration.

- Do not give your child apple juice, chicken broth, sports drinks, soft drinks or ginger ale. These drinks may make diarrhea worse.
- Offer frequent, small meals of easily digestible foods (cooked cereal, toast, applesauce, rice). Avoid high sugar foods.
- Do not use an electrolyte solution as the only source of fluids and nutrients for more than 24 hours.

Sometimes, diarrhea will last for 4 to 6 days. As your child gets better, the stool will get smaller and happen less often.

## Call Kaiser Permanente if your child...

### 1. Is vomiting and it is:

AGE	SEVERE - Most clear liquids and other feedings are being thrown up	OCCASIONAL - Occurs without other symptoms and where the child is able to keep fluids down between vomiting episodes
0 - 3 months	At first sign	Continues longer than 1 to 2 days
3 - 6 months	Continues for longer than 8 hours	Continues longer than 2 to 4 days
7 months - 4 years	Continues for longer than 12 hours	Continues longer than 1 to 2 weeks

### OR . . .

- Your child also has either a severe headache, is unusually sleepy (child cannot easily be awakened), or has a stiff neck.
- There is blood in the vomit.
- He or she also has a fever of 103 or higher, or a lower fever for more than 2 days.

### 2. Has diarrhea and it is:

AGE	SEVERE - Large loose stools every 1 to 2 hours	MILD to MODERATE - Diarrhea continues without obvious cause or other symptoms
0 - 3 months	Lasts for longer than 4 hours *Breast fed babies' stools can look like diarrhea	Lasts for longer than 24 hours
3 - 6 months	Lasts for longer than 8 hours	Continues 1 to 2 days
7 months - 4 years	Lasts for 1 to 2 days, with cramping	Continues for 4 to 7 days

### OR . . .

- The diarrhea is bloody, tarry, or dark red, or if the urine becomes bloody or brown in color.
- Your child has diarrhea along with a fever of 103 or higher, or a lower fever for more than two days.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your child's physician or other medical professional. If your child has persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your child's doctor. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.

### 3. Has signs of dehydration:

- Sunken eyes or a soft spot (on an infant's head), no tears, dry mouth and tongue
- Little or no urine for eight hours
- Skin that is doughy or doesn't bounce back when pinched
- A fast heartbeat or rapid breathing
- A difficult time waking up, or is very listless or extremely irritable
- Refuses to drink or cannot take in enough liquid to replace lost fluids

### 4. Is in pain and:

- Stomach pain is severe
- Stomach pain is persistent and there is frequent vomiting for more than 12 hours with little or no diarrhea
- Stomach pain starts several hours before the vomiting and seems like more than stomach cramps
- Stomach pain is not located near the bellybutton, especially if it seems to be in the child's lower right abdomen

### Other resources

- Visit our Web site at [kp.org](http://kp.org).
- Contact your facility's Health Education Department or center for health information, Healthy Living programs, and other resources.