



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

**Gastroenteritis (gas-troh-en-te-REYE-tis)
Diarrhea**

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is an increase in the number of bowel movements or an increase in the amount of water in the bowel movements. Diarrhea may be called gastroenteritis (gas-troh-en-te-REYE-tis).

A child with medium or severe diarrhea, will have very loose or liquid stools and may also have a fever, vomiting, and be fussy.

What is the cause?

Gastroenteritis or diarrhea may be caused by bacteria (bak-TEE-ree-ah) or viruses. Your child can pick up these germs from infected food or water or from other children who have them. Most of the time, water is absorbed by the bowel before your child has a bowel movement. When they have gastroenteritis or diarrhea the water is passed before it has time to be absorbed.

What is dehydration (d-hi-dray-shun)?

Dehydration occurs when a child loses more fluid than they take in. A child can become dehydrated when they have either severe vomiting and or severe diarrhea. Children become dehydrated when they are not able to drink enough fluid to keep up with the loss.

What are signs of dehydration?

- Dry mouth
- Sunken look around eyes
- No tears when crying (babies under six months usually do not have tears)
- Decreased amount of urine, fewer wet diapers than usual in an infant or toddler
- Rapid loss of weight

How can I help to not spread diarrhea?

The germs that cause diarrhea are spread in the bowel movements. If your child is at home or in the hospital, it is important to prevent the spread of these germs to others. At home, you should try to limit the number of people, mostly children, who come in contact

with your child.

Wash your hands after touching the linen, changing the diapers, and before eating. In the hospital, visitors are asked to wash their hands before going in and leaving your child's room. Gowns and gloves are worn by the nurses when they take care of your child.

How do I care for my child at home?

If you are taking care of a child at home with diarrhea or gastroenteritis there are some things you should know about what your child should eat.

- When the diarrhea is frequent and there is no vomiting, special liquids can be given along with normal feedings such as, (Pedialyte, Ecelyte or Infalyte).
- Thin baby food such as carrots or pureed cooked carrots with water.
- When diarrhea starts you can help you can help your child by giving them clear liquids such as jello, popsicles, and clear soda pop(7-Up, sprite, or ginger ale).

For infants who are not taking foods other than milk, ask your child's dietitian or doctor if changing to a soy formula such as Prosobee, Nursoy, or Isomil would be helpful.

What do I do when my child gets better?

- Add foods back slowly that are bland, good choices include toast, crackers, rice, hot cereals, bananas, applesauce, and diluted juices).
- Plain or vanilla yogurt with active cultures listed on the label is good dairy product to give as your child gets better because it helps stomach get back to normal.
- Frequent bowel movements may cause your child to have red, irritated skin in the diaper area.
- Change your child's diaper often
- Wash the skin gently with a mild soap and warm water, and rinse well.
- Do not use wipes that have alcohol in them
- Do not use powder or cornstarch
- Check with your child's doctor on what type of ointment or cream to use

Do not give your child medicine for diarrhea such as Kaopectate or Imodium, unless ordered by your child's doctor.

When should I call the doctor?

- There are signs of dehydration
- There is blood in the bowel movements.
- The vomiting or diarrhea last longer than 12 to 24 hours.
- Your child has a fever.
- Your child refuses to drink fluids.

NOTE: A small infant or child will dehydrate faster than an older child, so do not wait to call your child's doctor.

Speak up if you have any questions or concerns