

# Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting Advice Sheet (Gastroenteritis) - Advice for parents and carers of children



## How is your child?



Red

If your child has any of the following:

- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Going blue around the lips or too breathless to talk / eat or drink
- Becomes extremely agitated, confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass Test')
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100.4°F or above (unless fever in the 48 hours following vaccinations and no other red or amber features)

**You need urgent help**  
please phone 999  
or go to the nearest  
Hospital Emergency  
(A&E) Department



Amber

If your child has any of the following:

- Seems dehydrated: ie. dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, sunken fontanelle (soft spot on baby's head) or passing less urine than normal
- Has blood in the stool (poo) or Tummy pain that doesn't go away
- Has completely stopped drinking or breastfeeding Is unable to keep down any fluids during this illness
- Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle the with toys TV, food or picking up) – especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down
- Is 3-6 months of age with a temperature of 39°C / 102.2°F or above (but fever is common in babies up to 2 days after they receive vaccinations)
- If your child has diabetes, monitor their blood sugars closely and follow the sick day rules as specified by their individual plan
- Continues to have a fever of 38.0°C or more for more than 5 days.

Please ring your GP  
surgery or contact  
NHS 111 - dial 111 or  
for children aged 5  
years and above visit  
[111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk)



Green

If none of the above features is present, most children with diarrhoea and / or vomiting can be safely managed at home.

*(Please note that children younger than 1 year may become dehydrated more quickly. If your child appears otherwise well but you still have concerns, please contact your GP surgery or call NHS 111).*

**Self Care**  
Using the advice below  
you can provide the care  
your child needs at home

## How can I look after my child?

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids – little and often. Water is not enough and ideally oral rehydration solution (ORS) is best. ORS can be purchased over the counter at large supermarkets and pharmacies and can help prevent dehydration from occurring.
- Mixing the contents of the ORS sachet in dilute squash (not "sugar-free" squash) instead of water may improve the taste. Apple juice can also be used instead of ORS.
- Continue to offer your child their usual feeds, including breast and other milk feeds.
- Do not worry if your child is not interested in solid food. If they are hungry, offer them plain food such as biscuits, bread, pasta or rice. It is advisable not to give them fizzy drinks as this can make diarrhoea worse.
- Your child may have stomach cramps; if simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen do not help please seek further advice.
- Most children with diarrhoea and / or vomiting get better very quickly, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice given to you by your healthcare professional and / or as listed on this sheet.

# Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting Advice Sheet (Gastroenteritis) - Advice for parents and carers of children



## About Gastroenteritis

- Tummy bugs are extremely common in young children and are almost always caused by a virus.
- They are easily spread, resulting in outbreaks in nurseries and schools.
- Diarrhoea can often last between 5 – 7 days and stops within 2 weeks. Vomiting usually stops within 3 days. If your child continues to be ill for longer than these periods, seek advice.
- Severe diarrhoea and / or vomiting can lead to dehydration, which is when the body does not have enough water or the right balance of salts to carry out its normal functions. If the dehydration becomes severe it can be dangerous.
- Children at increased risk of dehydration include:
  - young babies under 1 year old (and especially the under 6 months)
  - babies born at a low birth weight and those who have stopped drinking or breastfeeding during the illness
  - children with faltering growth.

## After Care

Once your child is rehydrated and no longer vomiting:

- continue breastfeeding, other milk feeds and fluid intake - give full strength milk straight away.
- reintroduce the child's usual food.
- avoid giving fizzy drinks until the diarrhoea has stopped.
- if dehydration recurs, start giving ORS again.
- anti-diarrhoeal medicines (also called antimotility drugs) should not be given to children.
- your child cannot return to nursery / school until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea and / or vomiting.

## Preventing the spread of Gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and / or vomiting):



You and/or your child should wash your hands with soap (liquid if possible) in warm running water and then dry them carefully:

- After going to the toilet
- After changing nappies
- Before touching food



Your child should not:

- Share his or her towels with anyone
- Go to school or any other childcare facility until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea and / or vomiting
- Swim in swimming pools until 2 weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped