

# South East Bay Pediatric Medical Group, Inc.

Infant, Children, and Teenagers

## Diarrhea and Vomiting

### What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is increased frequency of loose or watery stools.

It can be accompanied by vomiting, fever, stomachache, or may be the only symptom in an otherwise healthy child.

### What can cause diarrhea?

- in infancy, usually a viral infection of the intestines
- less commonly, a bacterial infection of the intestines
- food poisoning
- may be part of a cold, throat, or ear infection
- less frequently, a change in diet, or parasites

### What happens?

The bowel is a hollow tube. Any of the causes above can irritate the lining of the tube. When this happens, food goes through too fast and the result is diarrhea, vomiting, or both.

If the diarrhea or vomiting is severe enough or continues long enough, your child can lose so much water that he/she can become dehydrated. *It is dehydration that we need to worry about, especially in babies because it is easier for them to become dehydrated.*

### Usual course:

Vomiting usually stops in 24-48 hrs. Diarrhea usually stops in 3-4 days, **but can last up to 1-2 weeks**. *The goal is to prevent dehydration until the illness runs its course and symptoms completely resolve.*

## Treatment of vomiting:

When your child is vomiting, you must stop those things that contribute to vomiting. *Stop milk and solid foods* as they can irritate the lining of the bowel and make things worse.

Begin the special diet listed, and don't rush it. *Keep in mind that it is better to feed small amounts frequently rather than a large amount all at once.* First let the child's vomiting subside before trying to feed any liquids – 1 hour of bowel rest with no fluids after the last episode of vomiting. Then start with clear liquids such as those listed below. Do not give plain water.

### For infants and toddlers:

- *optimal choices:* Pedialyte, Ricelyte, Kao-Lectrolyte, Infalyte, Gerber Electolyte
- Gatorade

### For older children:

- Pedialyte, Ricelyte, Kao-Lectrolyte, Infalyte, Gerber Electolyte
- Gatorade
- flat soda pop
- popsicles
- clear soup in small amounts only

## How much?

### If vomiting (with or without diarrhea):

Start with 1 tsp. every 5 minutes or ½ ounce (1 tablespoon) every 15-20 minutes for 2 hours, then gradually increase the amount to 1 ounce every 20 minutes for 2 hours. If this is tolerated, you may double the amount of fluid every 2 hours. When vomiting has resolved for 8-12 hours, you can start simple foods such as bananas, rice, apple sauce, toast, or crackers. *Avoid fatty foods or foods with heavy sauces.* A regular diet can be started after 24-48 hours.

## Treatment of diarrhea:

For diarrhea without vomiting, continue a regular diet but avoid lots of fruit juices and dairy products. Let your child drink as much as he/she wants. Encourage 2-6 ounces every 3-4 hours depending on your child's age and thirst. Encourage the foods listed below which help put form into the stool. Starchy foods are absorbed best. **Your doctor may have you avoid dairy products since some children with diarrhea have trouble digesting lactose (soy milk or Lactaid are alternative milk products).** Diluted fruit juice is ok, but full strength juice should be avoided as the sugar content in fruit juice can make the diarrhea worse.

- for breast-fed infants, continue breast feeding
- for formula-fed infants, change to a soy or lactose-free formula
- **for toddlers and older children, a regular diet is ok, but your doctor may have you limit fruits or vegetables because these foods are natural laxatives (bananas and potatoes are ok)**
- mashed bananas
- rice cereal
- apple sauce or cooked carrots
- rice / crackers / bread / pasta
- boiled or mashed potatoes (no butter)

Gradually add other foods over the next few days. Restart regular milk or formula after 48 hrs.

***DO NOT*** use Kaopectate, Donnagel, Immodium, Pepto Bismol-like products, boiled skim milk, enemas.

## **When to contact your doctor:**

- continued fever for more than 3 days
- persistent vomiting despite the above instructions
- yellow-green emesis (bile)
- prolonged stomachache or cramps
- excessive sleepiness/lethargy
- signs of dehydration, including:
  - dry mouth
  - absent tears
  - sunken eyes
  - decreased urination (none in 6 hours)
  - concentrated urine (dark yellow color)
  - lethargy
  - sunken fontanelle (soft spot) in infants
- diarrhea longer than 4 days
- no improvement despite 2 days of clear fluids
- blood in stool
- refusal to take fluids
- in general, acting sicker or worse

Or call whenever you have a question concerning the diet or a question concerning vomiting and diarrhea. Many times we can take care of things over the phone.

For Appointment Call

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