



# Diarrhoea and vomiting Information for parents

## What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is an infection in the bowel causing any or all of the following:

- tummy ache
- vomiting
- diarrhoea

Most infections are caused by viruses. Your child will get better without antibiotics. It is not recommended to give medications to children to stop the diarrhoea. Babies and young children are most likely to get the infection, but the infection can easily be passed onto other people. Keeping the environment as clean as possible helps prevent cross infection.

## What treatment does my child need?

You will be asked to wash your hands with soap and water (gel does not kill all the bugs) before entering and leaving the room, and when involved with direct care to your child (such as changing the nappy and feeding).

The loss of fluids and essential salts from the body has made your child ill. The treatment is to replace these fluids. Your child can continue to have their usual formula milk or breast milk feeds. If your child is vomiting or is dehydrated (not enough fluid in the body) they will be offered oral rehydration fluid. This helps to replace the sugars and salts lost from the body. If your child is dehydrated and unable to tolerate oral fluids the doctor will need to do some blood tests and your child may need fluid replaced through an intravenous infusion (drip).

## What can I do to help?

- Stay with your child as much as possible.
- Offer small frequent drinks.
- Talk with your child's nurse about filling in a record together of all the drinks, vomits, or diarrhoea your child has.
- Wash your hands carefully after changing nappies or before feeding,
- Apply cream when changing the nappy to prevent nappy rash.

## When can my child have food again?

The doctors and nurses will review your child regularly. As your child improves they can eat solid food. Avoid fruit juices and fizzy drinks until the diarrhoea has stopped. Probiotic yoghurts and drinks may also be helpful in restoring the bowel back to normal. Do not worry if your child has further

diarrhoea while their tummy is recovering from the infection. It is usual to have diarrhoea for 5 to 7 days and in most children it resolves within 2 weeks.

### **When can I take my child home?**

When your child is tolerating fluids, is not dehydrated, and you are happy your child is improving.

### **How long should I keep my child away from nursery or school?**

- Children should not attend any childcare facility or school when diarrhoea or vomiting is present.
- Following any episode of diarrhoea and vomiting, children under 5 years old can return to school or other child care facility 48 hours following the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Children should not swim in swimming pools for 2 weeks following the last episode of diarrhoea.

### **Does my child need to come back to hospital?**

Not usually, call the doctor or return to the Emergency Department if your child:

- stops wetting their nappies;
- is floppy and listless;
- cannot take any fluids;
- has a high temperature;
- does not continue to improve; or
- gives you cause for concern.

If you need further advice 48 hours after admission please ring

Starlight Children's Ward Tel: 0161 291 2248

Observation and Assessment Unit Tel: 0161 291 5459

Wythenshawe Hospital  
Southmoor Road  
Wythenshawe  
M23 9LT

Further Information:

Diarrhoea and vomiting due to gastroenteritis in children under 5 [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

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