

# Managing diarrhoea and vomiting in children

Children's Emergency Department

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Information for Patients, Parents & Carers

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## What is causing my child's diarrhoea and vomiting?

Diarrhoea and vomiting are often caused by a tummy bug (viral gastroenteritis). The healthcare professional who saw your child today thinks that this is the most likely cause for your child's symptoms, and feels they are well enough to be cared for at home.

Such illnesses are caused by various bugs, most of which will get better by themselves without any need for treatment. Because of this we don't usually do any tests, unless your child's symptoms are unusual or continue for longer than normal.

## How long will my child be unwell?

Diarrhoea often lasts 5 to 7 days and in most children will stop within 2 weeks.

Vomiting often lasts 1 to 2 days and in most children will stop within 3 days.

Please seek medical advice if symptoms last longer than this.

## How will I know if my child is not coping with this illness?

The main problem that gastroenteritis can cause is dehydration.

Children at risk of dehydration include:

- young babies.
- children who haven't been able to drink enough during their illness.
- children who have severe diarrhoea and vomiting.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

When your child is dehydrated they will appear unwell and may:

- pass less urine than normal (less than 2 nappies a day is a sign of a problem).
- be more sleepy than usual (drowsiness).
- have sunken eyes.
- have pale or mottled skin.
- have cold hands and feet.

## How to prevent and manage dehydration

- If your child is not dehydrated allow them to eat and drink as normal and offer plenty of fluids.
- Babies still on breast milk or formula should be offered this as normal. Do not water down formula milk. Solids can be re-introduced when your baby wants them.
- If you are breastfeeding please continue. Try feeding little and often if your child is struggling to keep down feeds.
- Fizzy drinks should be avoided as they can make diarrhoea worse.
- Getting your child to drink plenty of fluids is the priority if your child is dehydrated. Focus on this before food but don't stop a child from eating if they want food.
- If your child vomits, wait 5 to 10 minutes and then start giving drinks again.
- If dehydrated, children should be offered Dioralyte (a rehydration powder), or watered down apple juice frequently in small amounts.
- Dioralyte is a clear drink which provides a perfect balance of minerals and sugar to replace those lost because of diarrhoea and vomiting. It is not a medicine and does not stop diarrhoea or vomiting.

## Don't pass it on!

Gastroenteritis is highly infectious to other people. Some simple steps can be taken to reduce the spread of gastroenteritis as given below:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap (liquid soap if possible) in warm running water and carefully dry them afterwards.
- Always wash hands after going to the toilet or changing nappies, and before preparing, serving or eating food (including baby food).
- Use separate towels.
- Your child should not go to school or other childcare facilities until 48 hours after their last episode of diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Your child should not go swimming for 2 weeks after their last episode of diarrhoea.

## Contact details

If you have any concerns you can contact the NHS helpline on 111 for advice.

## Giving us your feedback

We would love to get some feedback on your visit today. Use your smart phone to scan this QR code for quick access to our online feedback survey form.



Alternatively, you can access the feedback form from our website:

<https://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk/patients/thinking-of-choosing-us/patient-experience/>

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