

Vomiting

Most people are familiar with the “stomach flu” and may have even had it once or twice themselves. However, watching your child go through it is entirely different. After changing several sets of sheets in one night – you will definitely be wondering what you can do to help. For this reason, vomiting is also one of our most common after-hours calls.

The most common reason children suddenly develop repeated vomiting is infection by a virus. There are many different viruses that can cause “stomach flu.” With many of these viruses the vomiting is severe for the first 12 hours and then slows down. Infants and young children can still have a few episodes of vomiting each day for 3-7 days. Diarrhea may start right away or may develop after 24 to 48 hours. There may be a fever and your child may complain of a stomachache and refuse to eat.

Other causes of vomiting should be easily recognized and are handled differently than will be outlined in this section. For example, if your child had a head injury and now has persistent vomiting, he/she should have an urgent evaluation. Sometimes children who have a cold will cough and gag on sputum, and this makes them vomit occasionally. This can usually just be observed. Infants can have regurgitation or “spitting up”. This is usually considered a normal feature of infancy and will be outgrown. Vomiting associated with a high fever and sore throat, or lower right-sided abdominal pain may not be due to “stomach flu” and should be evaluated.

How to handle vomiting at home:

After vomiting your child’s stomach needs rest! You should wait 1-2 hours before attempting to give your child anything by mouth. If there is no more vomiting during this time you could try 1-2 tsp of clear liquids (Pedialyte – the best fluid for infants, diluted apple juice, water) every 10-15 minutes for several hours. If this stays down after two hours, double the amount of fluid you are giving (2-4 tsp every 10-15 minutes). If giving increased fluid goes well, try more volume, a Popsicle or jello. Don’t add solid food until your child has been doing well on clear liquids for 12 hours. Then try a few cheerios or crackers and wait to see what happens. If the vomiting returns at any point, then start the process over.

Many times children are thirsty after vomiting so much. They would guzzle down a full sippy cup if you gave it to them. However, their stomach is irritated and can’t handle that much. All that fluid will come right back up, making the situation even worse. By giving tiny amounts of clear liquids the stomach will be able to absorb this fluid rather than reject it, and you will be helping to prevent your child from becoming dehydrated.

Vomiting *(continued)*

Parents often are concerned that their child isn't eating anything during this type of illness. Your child will make up for any calories or weight they have lost after the illness is over. During the vomiting illness the primary concern is keeping your child from becoming dehydrated. You will have the best chance of doing this by following the plan outlined above.

When to call or come in to the office:

Watch for signs of dehydration in your child. In an infant the soft spot might appear sunken, there may be no tears, the mouth might feel sticky or somewhat dry, and the baby would be listless. In an older child watch for listlessness, sunken eyes, cool hands and feet. You might also call for advice or make an appointment to come to the office if the vomiting is just not letting up, or you are unable to start giving any fluids because of the frequency of the vomiting. In the office we will simply be talking to you and examining your child. In most cases we do not find dehydration, and we can send you home with reassurance and advice. If your child is dehydrated and there seems to be no way of rehydrating him or her at home then we will send you to the hospital so your child can be given intravenous (iv) fluids.