



Gastroenteritis and YOUR CHILD



University Hospitals and Health System
Jackson, MS

Department of Pediatrics
Batson Hospital for Children
Jackson Mississippi

What is gastroenteritis?

- Gastroenteritis is a word used to describe infection or irritation of the stomach and bowels (small and large intestines)
- People sometimes call this the “stomach flu”
- Gastroenteritis usually lasts 2-5 days



What causes gastroenteritis?

- Simple viral infections are usually the cause
- Other types of infections (like bacteria and parasites) can cause gastroenteritis too, but these are less common
- Rotavirus infection is the most common cause of serious diarrhea (watery stools) in infants and young children

How did my child get gastroenteritis?

- It is spread by close contact with an infected person
- This includes kissing, eating or drinking from the same dishes or sharing utensils like forks and spoons



Who gets gastroenteritis?

- Any person can get gastroenteritis, but the condition can be more serious in young children and babies

Is there a treatment for gastroenteritis?

- Antibiotics will not help viral gastroenteritis. Antibiotics may help certain types of bacterial gastroenteritis, but these types are not common.



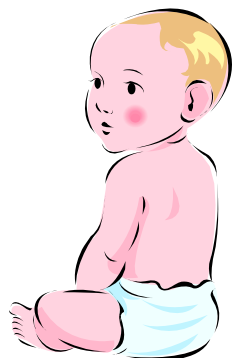
How will I know if my child has gastroenteritis?

- Some of the signs of gastroenteritis are:
 - Abdominal (belly) cramps or pain
 - Acting tired, weak or fussy
 - Diarrhea (loose, watery bowel movements)
 - Headaches or muscle aches
 - High body temperature (fever over 100.4°F)
 - Nausea (upset stomach)
 - Vomiting (throwing up)
 - No appetite (not wanting to eat)



How will I know if my child is dehydrated?

(Dehydration means not enough liquids in your body)



- The first symptoms of dehydration for a baby are:
 - Not wetting many diapers
 - Dry mouth and cracked lips
 - Cries without many tears or no tears at all
- Later signs of dehydration in a baby are:
 - Acting sleepier, weaker, or fussier than usual
 - Eyes that look sunken in
 - The soft spot on the top of the baby's head looks sunken in
 - Wrinkled skin, pale hands and feet
- Signs of dehydration for the older child are:
 - Dry mouth and cracked lips
 - Crying without tears
 - Feeling or acting dizzy
 - Acting sleepier, fussier, and weaker than usual
 - Being very thirsty
 - Urinating less than usual



How can I prevent the spread of gastroenteritis?

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water often during the day
- Wash your hands every time you go to the bathroom or change a diaper
- Do not let food come in contact with human or animal waste
- Do not share drinks or food with others
- Clean all drinking and eating utensils and dishes in the dishwasher or with hot water and soap after use
- Clean surfaces that come in contact with stool, diapers, or material that have stool on them



Hand washing instructions

1. Wet hands first with water, then apply soap (use warm water)
2. Rub hands together vigorously for 15 seconds covering all surfaces of hands and fingers
3. Rinse hands well and dry thoroughly



How can I care for my child at home?

1. The main goal is to keep your child from getting dehydrated. Fluid replacement is very important.
2. Give your child Pedialyte® or other oral rehydration drinks (sugar free). This gives your child nutrients that are lost when vomiting or having diarrhea. Pedialyte® can be bought at the grocery store or drug store. If you choose a different brand, be sure it is sugar free. Sugar makes diarrhea worse and will not help your child get better.
3. If your child is vomiting, give small sips of fluid every 10 to 15 minutes. Giving fluid or foods too fast can make vomiting worse.
4. Do not give large amounts of plain water. Water does not help to replace nutrients lost with vomiting and diarrhea.
5. If your child is not vomiting, try feeding very small amounts of favorite foods that he/she likes. If your child doesn't want food, continue offering Pedialyte® or other liquids without caffeine, carbonation, or sugar (diet 7-up®, diet ginger ale, diet Sprite®, sugar free Kool-aid®, or Crystal Light®).
6. Avoid concentrated sweets such as regular soda, sports drinks, or fruit juices. These can make diarrhea worse.
7. Offer infants formula, breast milk, or Pedialyte® (avoid juices)



When should I call the doctor?

If your child has:

- Signs of dehydration (listed above)
- Blood or mucus (pus) in the stool
- Excessive stomach cramping or pain
- If your child is younger than 2 months and has a fever over 100.4°F
- If your older child has a fever you are concerned about



Call 9-1-1 if your child:

- Is very weak, limp, or not moving
- Has a seizure, passes out or faints
- Is not responding or is difficult to wake up
- Skin turns blue or gray
- Stops breathing—START CPR if needed



Suggested Foods for Children with Diarrhea

- Bread-Cereal-Starch—rolls, biscuit, toast, tortilla, saltine cracker, graham cracker, cooked or ready to eat cereals (avoid sugar coated cereals), rice, noodles, potatoes (boiled or baked)
- Meats-Chicken-Eggs-Fish—any lean meat, skinless chicken or turkey, fish, or eggs (baked, broiled, boiled, poached; don't fry), beans, lentils, tofu
- Dairy—encourage low fat yogurt with active cultures, low fat cheeses, low fat milk
- Soups—broth or soups without cream, whole milk, or cheese
- Veggies-Fruits—fruits and vegetables in small amounts
- Drinks—Pedialyte®, sugar free Kool-aid®

Foods to avoid during illness

- Potato chips and tortilla chips
- Donuts and sweet rolls
- Fatty meats (bacon, sausage, hot dogs)
- Whole milk, cheddar cheese, cream cheese
- Ice cream and sherbet
- Heavy soups or stews with cream or cheese
- Cookies, cakes, candy, jellies and jams, syrups, honey, butter and oils

This information is general and not specific to your child. It is intended to provide you with information. If you have questions or concerns, please call your doctor or pharmacy for more information.

