

Paediatric department

Diarrhoea & vomiting - gastroenteritis in children

This leaflet gives you information about how to care for a child with diarrhoea and vomiting (gastroenteritis)

What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is an infection of the gut which causes diarrhoea (watery, smelly poo), vomiting and tummy pain.

How do I look after my child with gastroenteritis?

- Continue breastfeeding, if this applies to you.
- Encourage fluid intake, little and often.
- Tips for getting fluid into your child include offering drinks via a straw or medicine syringe, or offering ice lollies.
- Avoid carbonated fizzy drinks, fruit juices and dairy products.
- Offer drinks such as Dioralyte which help to rehydrate.
- When they are taking fluids without vomiting the next step is to add small amounts of bland solid food – you could start with a bit of banana or plain toast.

When should I seek medical advice?

Please contact your GP or phone 111 if:

- Your child has had diarrhoea more than 6 times in the past 24 hours or has blood in their poo.
- Your child has been vomiting 3 times or more in the past 24 hours.
- Your child has stopped breastfeeding.
- Your child is having dry nappies or having fewer than 2-3 wet nappies in a 24 hour period.
- Your child is unusually sleepy or difficult to comfort.
- Your child has cold hands or feet or blotchy skin.
- Your child has constant tummy pain.
- Your child is less than 6 months old and has vomiting and diarrhoea. Young babies are more at risk of dehydration.
- If your child looks pale, weak or floppy.
- You are very concerned about your child.

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How do I prevent the spread of gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is easily spread from one person to another. To prevent this:

- **Wash your hands** (and your child's) with soap and water after going to the toilet, changing nappies and before preparing /serving or eating food. Please note that alcohol gel/alcohol handwash will **not** stop the germs from spreading.
- Do not share towels and flannels.
- Wash soiled clothes/bedding separately - at temperatures of 60°
- Regularly clean the toilet at home with disinfectant/bleach.
- Do not send your children to school, nursery or classes whilst they have diarrhoea and vomiting. They should not return until at least 48 hours after their last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

With most common tummy bugs, diarrhoea usually lasts up to 5 days, and vomiting up to 3 days.

- ➔ Please seek GP advice if symptoms last longer.

For more information

Your child's GP, health visitor or paediatrician will be able to answer any further questions you have.

For further information please see:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/>



Patient Advice and Liaison Services (PALS)

PALS can provide information, advice and support to patients and relatives and will listen to and act on your concerns, suggestions or queries.

020 8934 3993

khft.pals@nhs.net

Accessible information

We are actively working to make our patient information easier to read and accessible in a range of formats. If you would like this information in large print, audio or electronic format please speak to a member of staff in the department. If you need a different format, please let us know and we will do our best to meet your request

Pastoral & Spiritual Support Services

We offer a multi-cultural approach serving people of all faiths and life philosophies. A Duty Chaplain is available 24/7. You can request to speak to a Church of England or Roman Catholic Priest, the Rabbi or Imam.

Please call the hospital switchboard on 020 8546 7711 and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain.

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