

# Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting Advice Sheet (Gastroenteritis) - Advice for parents and carers of children



## How is your child?



Red

### If your child:

- becomes difficult to rouse / unresponsive
- becomes pale and floppy
- is finding it difficult to breathe
- has cold feet and hands

**You need urgent help**  
please phone 999  
or go to the nearest  
Hospital Emergency  
(A&E) Department



Amber

### If your child:

- seems dehydrated: ie. dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, sunken fontanelle (soft spot on baby's head) or passing less urine than normal
- has blood in the stool (poo)
- has constant tummy pain
- has stopped drinking or breastfeeding
- is unable to keep down any fluids during this illness
- becomes lethargic or drowsy
- Has a temperature above 38°C / 100.4°F
- If your child has diabetes, monitor their blood sugars closely

**You need to contact a doctor or nurse today**  
Please ring your  
GP surgery or call  
**NHS 111 - dial 111**



Green

If none of the above features is present, most children with diarrhoea and / or vomiting can be safely managed at home.

*(Please note that children younger than 1 year may become dehydrated more quickly. If your child appears otherwise well but you still have concerns, please contact your GP surgery or call **NHS 111**).*

**Self Care**  
Using the advice overleaf you can provide the care your child needs at home

Most children with diarrhoea and / or vomiting get better very quickly, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice given to you by your healthcare professional and / or as listed on this sheet.

## Some useful phone numbers (You may want to add some numbers on here too)



**GP Surgery**  
(make a note of number here)  
.....

**NHS 111**  
**dial 111**

(available 24 hrs -  
7 days a week)

**Children's Ward**  
.....

**Acute Community  
Nursing Team**  
.....

For online advice: **Healthier Together** [www.what0-18.nhs.uk](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk) (available 24 hrs / 7 days a week)

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This guidance is written by healthcare professionals from across Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight

# Diarrhoea and/or Vomiting Advice Sheet

(Gastroenteritis) - Advice for parents and carers of children



## About Gastroenteritis

Tummy bugs are extremely common in young children and are almost always caused by a virus. They are easily spread, resulting in outbreaks in nurseries and schools. Severe diarrhoea and / or vomiting can lead to dehydration, which is when the body does not have enough water or the right balance of salts to carry out its normal functions. If the dehydration becomes severe it can be dangerous. Children at increased risk of dehydration include: young babies under 1 year old (and especially the under 6 months), babies born at a low birth weight and those who have stopped drinking or breastfeeding during the illness and children with faltering growth.

## How can I look after my child?

- Diarrhoea can often last between 5 – 7 days and stops within 2 weeks. Vomiting usually stops within 3 days. If your child continues to be ill for longer than these periods, seek advice.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids – little and often. Water is not enough and ideally oral rehydration solution (ORS) is best. ORS can be purchased over the counter at large supermarkets and pharmacies and can help prevent dehydration from occurring.
- Mixing the contents of the ORS sachet in dilute squash (not “sugar-free” squash) instead of water may improve the taste.
- Continue to offer your child their usual feeds, including breast and other milk feeds.
- Do not worry if your child is not interested in solid food. If they are hungry, offer them plain food such as biscuits, bread, pasta or rice. It is advisable not to give them fizzy drinks as this can make diarrhoea worse.
- If your child has other symptoms or a fever over 38°C / 100.4°F, you may need to ask for advice from a health care professional.
- Your child may have stomach cramps; if simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen do not help please seek further advice.
- **Hand washing is the best way to stop gastroenteritis spreading.**

## After Care

Once your child is rehydrated and no longer vomiting:

- continue breastfeeding, other milk feeds and fluid intake - give full strength milk straight away.
- reintroduce the child's usual food.
- avoid giving fizzy drinks until the diarrhoea has stopped
- if dehydration recurs, start giving ORS again
- anti-diarrhoeal medicines (also called antimotility drugs) should not be given to children
- your child cannot return to nursery / school until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea and / or vomiting

## Preventing the spread of Gastroenteritis (diarrhoea and / or vomiting):



You and/or your child should wash your hands with soap (liquid if possible) in warm running water and then dry them carefully:

- After going to the toilet
- After changing nappies
- Before touching food



Your child should not:

- Share his or her towels with anyone
- Go to school or any other childcare facility until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea and / or vomiting
- Swim in swimming pools until 2 weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped