

# Gastroenteritis

(diarrhoea and/or vomiting)

Advice Sheet for parents and carers of children

## How long will the symptoms last?

Diarrhoea usually lasts five to seven days but may continue for up to two weeks. Vomiting usually does not last for more than three to four days. Please see the traffic light advice overleaf to help you monitor the condition of your child.



Unwell children will often refuse fluids but can be persuaded, so it is important to persevere. Keep trying to give them drinks. Little and often is best.

## Caring for your child at home

- Most children can be looked after at home with simple advice, time and patience.
- The most important thing is to replace fluid your child will be losing due to vomiting and / or diarrhoea.
- It is fine if they do not want to eat, **drinks are most important** and food can wait till they are better
- Make sure you try and continue breastfeeding or bottle-feeding
- **For a child under one**, you can give small sips every few minutes (using a teaspoon or a plastic syringe, try 5mls every five minutes). With the plastic syringe aim the fluids into the side of the baby's mouth as they may swallow it more easily then.
- **For all children**, give drinks little and often e.g. every 10 minutes. If they are thirsty and take too much at a time, it may cause them to vomit.
- **For older children**, try using ice lollies or encourage drinking through a straw

## TOP TIPS

- Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) such as Diaorlyte or Electrolade should not be used in infants under 3 months without speaking to your GP. In children under a year it should be added to freshly boiled and cooled water according to the directions. In older children it can be added to full sugar squash to taste nicer (blackcurrant works well!).
- It is useful to keep a record of the number of drinks and the number of wees that your child has had each day

## Useful Contacts

If you need advice:

Find your local pharmacy at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Health Visitor: .....

Your GP Surgery: .....

Please contact your GP when the surgery is open or call **NHS 111** when the GP surgery is closed.

**NHS 111** provides advice for urgent care needs.

**NHS 111** is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

For online advice and information **NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

If you are worried about your child, trust your instincts.

Contact your GP or dial 111.

Based on: Diarrhoea and vomiting in children under 5 2009 NICE clinical guideline 84

## What Is Gastroenteritis?

- Gastroenteritis is an upset tummy that can cause diarrhoea and / or vomiting.
- It is caused by viruses, is mild and can usually be managed at home.
- Your child may first have tummy ache and fever
- Most children with diarrhoea and vomiting get better very quickly, but some children can get worse.
- One of the main risks of gastroenteritis in children and especially babies is they may become dehydrated
- You need to regularly check your child and follow the advice in this leaflet

## Preventing Dehydration

Signs of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth
- Dry tongue and lips
- Less tears when crying
- Sunken eyes
- Passing less urine than normal
- Weakness
- Being irritable or lethargic

**The most important thing is to replace the fluid that your child will be losing when they have diarrhoea and/ or vomiting**

### GOOD FLUIDS

Oral Rehydration Sachets (see advice in Top Tips)  
Water  
Squash (not sugar free)  
Milk

### BAD FLUIDS

Fruit Juice  
Fizzy drinks (can make diarrhoea worse)

Published 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 Review 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015

*This guidance is written in the following context*

This document was arrived at after careful consideration of the evidence available including but not exclusively NICE, SIGN, EBM data and NHS evidence, as applicable. Healthcare professionals are expected to take it fully into account when exercising their clinical judgement. The guidance does not, however, override the individual responsibility of healthcare professionals to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances of the individual patient in consultation with the patient and / or carer.

This was approved by Oxfordshire CCG Clinical Ratification Group on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

## What to keep in your medicine cabinet

Keep the following items in your medicine cabinet ready for when you may need them:

- Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) Sachets (eg. Dioralyte or Electrolade)
- Liquid Paracetamol (eg. Calpol / Medinol)
- Liquid Ibuprofen (eg. Nurofen) – Please note that if your child has been diagnosed with Asthma, Ibuprofen is not recommended, unless discussed first with your doctor.

Please check the Use-By dates and keep out of the reach of children. These medicines are all available over the counter from a pharmacist. The pharmacy or supermarket own brands are cheaper and work just as well. If you are unsure, ask your pharmacist.

## Preventing the spread of gastroenteritis

**Hand washing** - The most effective way is for you and/or your child to wash your hands with liquid soap ideally 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 two weeks after the diarrhoea has stopped.

**Children who are younger than one year or were born at a low birth weight are more vulnerable.**

If you have concerns about looking after your child at home, please contact your GP or call NHS 111.

## What do I do if my child has gastroenteritis? (traffic light advice)

**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 in this leaflet.**

 <b>RED</b>	<p><b>If your child has signs of dehydration and:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Becomes unresponsive</li><li>• <b>or</b> is breathing faster than usual</li><li>• <b>or</b> has unusually pale or mottled skin</li><li>• <b>or</b> has cold extremities (colder hands and feet than usual)</li></ul>	<p><b>You need EMERGENCY HELP</b></p> <p>Call <b>999</b> - you need to be seen at the A&amp;E department</p> <p>Nearest Hospitals (open 24 hours, seven days a week):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John Radcliffe, Oxford</li><li>• Horton, Banbury</li><li>• Royal Berkshire, Reading</li><li>• Great Western, Swindon</li><li>• Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury</li></ul> <p><b>Bring your child's Red Book with you.</b></p>
 <b>AMBER</b>	<p><b>If your child:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appears to be getting worse or if you are worried</li><li>• <b>or</b> is getting more thirsty despite drinking</li><li>• <b>or</b> is not drinking</li><li>• <b>or</b> has <u>signs of dehydration</u> such as a <b>dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes, the soft spot at the top of the head is more dipped in than usual, more sleepy than usual, they wee less or seem generally unwell</b></li><li>• <b>or</b> has blood in the stool (poo)</li><li>• <b>or</b> has had 6 or more bouts of diarrhoea in 24 hours</li><li>• <b>or</b> has 3 or more vomits in 24 hours</li><li>• <b>or</b> has a high temperature</li><li>• <b>or</b> is in constant pain</li></ul>	<p><b>Seek Medical Advice Today</b></p> <p>Ring your GP surgery - Mon-Fri 8am to 6.30pm</p> <p>Most practices will want to speak to you on the phone first to give you medical advice. They will arrange to see your child if it is appropriate</p> <p>At all other times and bank holidays call NHS 111</p> <p><b>Bring your child's Red Book with you.</b></p>
 <b>GREEN</b>	<p><b>Most children with diarrhoea and /or vomiting can be safely looked after at home</b></p> <p><b>If your child has none of the symptoms in the red or amber boxes above you can look after them at home.</b></p>	<p><b>Self care</b></p> <p>Using the advice on this leaflet you can care for your child at home. The most important advice is to keep your child well hydrated.</p> <p>If you feel you need advice please contact your <b>Health Visitor, GP surgery or your local pharmacy</b> (follow the links at <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>)</p> <p>You can also call <b>NHS 111</b></p>