

Childhood Gastroenteritis – Diarrhoea and Vomiting. **Parent Advice Sheet**

What is it?

Gastroenteritis is an infection of the bowel (intestines) that causes diarrhoea and vomiting. It is common in infants and children. Diarrhoea and vomiting sometimes cause the loss of important fluids (dehydration).

What are the symptoms of gastroenteritis?

The most common symptoms are:

- Diarrhoea, usually lasting 2-7 days
- nausea and vomiting lasting 1-2 days
- abdominal/stomach pain
- fever.

What can I do if my infant or child has gastroenteritis?

Most children can be looked after at home.

If your child has diarrhoea but is otherwise well?

Use extra drinks to replace the fluid they are losing, water flavoured with a little diluting juice is probably best. Feeding children normally will not make things worse.

⊥ Avoid giving natural orange fruit juices, fizzy drinks (even if “flat”), or sport drinks. Their high sugar content may make diarrhoea worse

¶ If you are breast-feeding, continue to feed on demand but give extra drinks of cooled boiled water between breast feeds

¶ If your infant is bottle-fed, continue feeding as usual with full-strength formula

⊥ Avoid sugary or fatty foods

What if my child keeps vomiting?

Vomiting is a common early symptom of gastroenteritis. Most children with vomiting and diarrhoea can be treated at home with oral rehydration solutions (ORS) e.g. Dioralyte. You can also use diluted (half-strength) fresh apple juice. The trick is to give very small volumes very frequently. For example, give 5mls every 5 minutes.

As the vomiting improves, you can increase the amount of ORS or apple juice you give and give it less often.

What treatments are not helpful?

Medicines to treat vomiting or diarrhoea are not necessary or helpful.

When should I call my GP, NHS24 or attend the Emergency Department?

- If you are worried that your child is becoming dehydrated. Signs or symptoms of dehydration are:

Dry mouth;

Sunken eyes;

Excessive thirst;

No urine in 8 to 12 hours or small amounts of dark urine;

More sleepy than with a routine illness;

No tears with crying.

- Your baby is less six months old;
- Your child keeps vomiting (especially if green or brown) and cannot keep fluids down;
- Your child's stools or bowel motions contains blood;
- You **can't** get fluids into the child **and** the diarrhoea lasts longer than 24 hours;

#