



Paediatric Department

Caring for a child with diarrhoea and vomiting at home

Most children with infectious diarrhea, also called *gastroenteritis*, can be safely managed at home with appropriate advice and support.

Children at increased risk of dehydration include those:

- Less than 6 months of age (particularly if they were born prematurely or weighed less than 2.5 kg at birth)
- Who have passed more than 5 large watery stools in the previous 24 hours
- Who have vomited more than twice in the previous 24 hours
- Who have persistently refused fluids
- With a pre-existing condition that causes poor weight gain

The following symptoms may indicate dehydration:

- Appearing to get more unwell
- Changing responsiveness (for example, irritability, tiredness)
- Decreased urine output
- Pale or *mottled* skin (red or purple spots on any part of the body)
- Cold arms and/or legs

If your child develops any of the above signs you should contact your GP (or Kingfisher ward if your child regularly attends Kingfisher ward or has recently been discharged from Kingfisher ward).

For children who are *not* dehydrated and are *not* at increased risk of dehydration:

- Continue usual feeds, including breast or other milk feeds
- Encourage the child to drink plenty of fluids
- Discourage the drinking of fruit juices and fizzy drinks (drinks with high amounts of sugar will make the diarrhoea worse)



For children who are *not* dehydrated but who *are* at increased risk of dehydration:

- Continue usual feeds, including breast or other milk feeds.
- Encourage the child to drink plenty of fluids.
- Discourage the drinking of fruit juices and fizzy drinks (drinks with high amounts of sugar will make the diarrhoea worse).
- Offer 'Oral Rehydration Solution' (ORS), such as Dioralyte™ (available from your local pharmacy) as supplemental fluid. 5 ml of solution for each kg your child weighs, or about _____ ml after each loose watery stool.

For children with dehydration:

Rehydration is usually possible with 'Oral Rehydration Solution' (ORS).

- Make up the ORS according to the instructions on the packaging.
- Give your child ORS in small amounts and very frequently. For example, give 2 ml of solution for each kg your child weighs (about _____) every 10 minutes for the first 4 hours or so, and then reassess your child's progress.
- Seek advice if the child refuses to drink the ORS or vomits persistently.
- Breastfeeding may continue.

After rehydration:

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of their usual fluids, including milk feeds.
- Avoid giving fruit juices and fizzy drinks until the diarrhoea has stopped (drinks with high amounts of sugar will make the diarrhoea worse).
- Reintroduce your child's usual diet.
- Give 5 ml of ORS for each kg your child weighs after each large watery stool if you feel that your child is at increased risk of dehydration.

General advice:

- Washing hands with soap (liquid soap if possible) under warm running water and careful drying are the most important factors in preventing the spread of diarrhoea. Please visit 'Henry the Hand' (<https://www.henrythehand.com/>) for more information about hand hygiene.
- Hands should always be washed after going to the toilet (children and parents) or after changing nappies (parents/carers) and before preparing, serving or eating food.
- Towels used by infected children should *not* be shared.
- Children should *not* attend school or childcare facilities while they have diarrhoea or vomiting to prevent the spread of gastroenteritis.



- Children should *not* go back to their school or childcare facility until at least **48 hours** after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Children should *not* swim in swimming pools for 2 weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.

How long can gastroenteritis last?

The usual duration of diarrhoea is 5–7 days and in most children it stops within 2 weeks.

The usual duration of vomiting is 1 or 2 days and in most children it stops within 3 days.

Seek medical advice if your child's symptoms do not resolve within these time frames.

For further information:

For further information about diarrhoea, please visit the Wessex Healthier Together website at: <http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/parents-and-carers/worried-your-child-unwell/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/>

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