

Vomiting: Brief Version

What causes vomiting?

When your child throws up, it is often caused by a virus. Your child may also have watery bowel movements (diarrhea). Most of the time, vomiting stops in 6 to 24 hours. The diarrhea may keep going for a day or 2 more. If your child has vomiting without diarrhea, and it lasts more than 24 hours, your child may have something more serious and needs to be seen.

How can I take care of my child?

1. **Give clear fluids for 8 hours.** Give 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon (5 to 15 ml) of clear fluid every 5 minutes by spoon or syringe. After 4 hours without vomiting, double the amount.
 - **For babies under 1 year old.** Always use a special oral electrolyte solution like Pedialyte or the store brand. These drinks help give your baby important minerals that can be lost when throwing up. Until you can get some, give formula 1 tsp at a time. If your child also has diarrhea, use Pedialyte.
 - **For breast-fed babies.** If you are breast-feeding and your baby has thrown up more than once, continue breast-feeding, but nurse on only one side for 5 minutes every 30 to 60 minutes. After 4 hours without vomiting, return to regular breastfeeding.
 - **For toddlers over 1 year old.** The best clear fluid is water or ice chips. If the vomiting continues for over 12 hours, switch to Pedialyte.
 - **For children over 2 years old.** Give your child water or ice chips. You can also give your child flat, lemon-lime soda. Make a drink of half water and half soda.
2. **Give bland foods 8 hours after your child stops throwing up.**
 - Babies who eat solid food can start with cereals or strained bananas.
 - Older children can have saltine crackers, cereals, bland soups, and mashed potatoes, or honey on white bread.
 - Give the bland foods for 24 hours.
3. **Do not give medicine your child doesn't need.** Do not give any medicine unless your doctor tells you to. Medicines can irritate the stomach and make the vomiting last longer.

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child shows signs of not getting enough fluids (does not urinate (pee) in 8 hours, has a very dry mouth, has no tears when he cries).
- Your child vomits blood or something that looks like coffee grounds.
- Your child vomits repeatedly AND also has watery diarrhea.
- Your child is confused and is hard to wake up.
- Your child has stomach pain when not vomiting.
- Your child starts to act very sick.

Call your doctor during office hours if:

- Your child is under age 2 and throws up for more than 24 hours.
- Your child is over age 2 and throws up for more than 48 hours.
- You have other concerns or questions.

Written by Barton D. Schmitt, MD, author of "My Child Is Sick," American Academy of Pediatrics Books.

Published by RelayHealth.

Last Modified: 5/15/2012

Last Reviewed: 6/3/2013

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

Copyright ©2013 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.