

# Diarrhoea and Vomiting in children

## Information for parents/carers

Most children with Diarrhoea and Vomiting get better very quickly, but some children can get worse. You need to regularly check your child regularly and follow the advice below.

### How is your child?

#### Not too unwell

Most children with Diarrhoea and Vomiting can be safely managed at home however:

- If your child is younger than 1 year
- If your child had a low birth weight
- Or you have a concern about looking after your child at home

Contact your GP to make an appointment or health services as detailed below.

Your child does not have any of the features mentioned below and you feel that you can manage to care for him/her

Not all children with diarrhoea and vomiting need to see a doctor. Watch for any of the changes listed on this sheet and contact someone if you become concerned.

#### Fairly unwell

If your child

- is not drinking
- has not passed water (peed) in the last 12 hours
- has other signs of dehydration such as a dry mouth
- is unusually sleepy
- has blood in the stool (poo)
- has had diarrhoea 6 or more times in 24 hours

Immediately contact your GP to make an appointment for your child to be seen that day. If you are unable to contact your GP, contact the Out of Hours Service or NHS Direct (0845 4647)

- If your child is not improving or continues to vomit after 4 hours of treatment by GP / nurse

Re-contact primary care service who will reassess

#### Very unwell

If your child

- is difficult to wake
- is floppy
- is very irritable or has an unusual cry
- has unusually pale or mottled skin
- has blue lips
- has cold hands and feet
- is breathing faster than usual
- is not feeding at all

**Ring 999-you need help immediately**

## **What is diarrhoea and vomiting?**

Diarrhoea in young children is usually caused by an infection in the gut, known as gastroenteritis. Children with gastroenteritis usually have loose or watery stools and may also vomit. The infection can be caught from other people, and can affect children who have recently been abroad. During gastroenteritis, hand washing and good cleanliness is important to help stop the spread of infection.

Most children with gastroenteritis get better quickly without treatment and can be looked after at home safely. Remember it can last between 7 and 10 days. Severe diarrhoea and vomiting can lead to dehydration, which is when the body doesn't have enough water to work as normal. Children with dehydration often feel and look unwell, and if severe it can be dangerous. Dehydration is more likely to occur in young babies.

## **How to look after your child at home**

- Continue to offer your child light feeds, including breast or other milk feeds.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and offer small amounts often
- Do not give fizzy drinks and/or fruit juices.
- You may be advised to give an Oral Rehydration Solution
- Please remember to wash your hands and your child's hands with soap and warm water before eating or drinking and after every vomit or loose stool (poo).
- Do not share towels with a child who is vomiting or has diarrhoea.

## **What other things to look for?**

- Your child may have stomach cramps; if simple painkillers do not help please seek further advice
- If your child has other symptoms like a high temperature, stiff neck, or rash please ask for advice from a health care professional.

## **How long does Diarrhoea last?**

- Diarrhoea can often last between 7 and 10 days.
- Children should not return to school or nursery/child care for 48 hours following the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.
- If you do keep your child away please tell the nursery or school that he/she is unwell.
- There is no need to see your doctor if your baby/child is recovering well. If you are worried about your baby's progress, contact your doctor or NHS Direct.