

Self-Care for Vomiting and Diarrhea



Vomiting and diarrhea can make you feel awful. Your stomach and bowels are reacting to an irritant. This might be food, medicine, bacteria, or a virus. Vomiting and diarrhea are 2 ways your body tries to remove the problem from your system. Nausea is a symptom that prevents you from eating. This can give your stomach and bowels time to recover. Self-care can help ease your discomfort.



Drink liquids

Drink or sip liquids. This is so you don't lose too much fluid (dehydration). To do this:

- Choose clear liquids, such as water or broth.
- Don't have drinks with a lot of sugar in them. This includes juice and soda. These can make diarrhea worse.
- Don't have drinks with caffeine and alcohol.
- If you have severe vomiting or diarrhea, don't drink sports drinks or electrolyte drinks. These don't have the right mix of water, sugar, and minerals. They can make the symptoms worse. Try an oral rehydration solution.
- Suck on ice chips if nausea makes it hard for you to drink.

When you're able to eat again

Try these tips:

- As nausea eases and your appetite comes back, slowly go back to your normal diet.
- Ask your provider if you should not eat certain foods.

Medicines

When considering medicines:

- Don't use medicines to stop diarrhea or vomiting unless your provider tells you to do so. Vomiting and diarrhea can help your body get rid of harmful substances.
- Some medicines can cause vomiting and diarrhea. Talk with your provider about all medicines you take. Ask which ones may cause these symptoms.
- Aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can bother your stomach. Don't use them when you have an upset stomach.
- Some over-the-counter medicines can help control nausea. Others can help soothe an upset stomach. Ask your provider which medicines may help you.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your provider right away if you have any of these:

- Bloody or black vomit or poop
- Severe, steady belly pain
- Vomiting with a bad headache or stiff neck
- Vomiting after a head injury
- Vomiting and diarrhea together for more than 1 hour
- Can't sip liquids after more than 12 hours
- Vomiting that lasts more than 24 hours
- Severe diarrhea that lasts more than 2 days
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as advised
- Yellow color to your skin or the whites of your eyes (jaundice)
- Can't pee
- Can't keep down some oral medicines, such as those for seizures or heart problems

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