

# Diet for Vomiting and Diarrhea (Child)



Vomiting and diarrhea are common in children. When this happens, a child can quickly become dehydrated. This means they lose too much water and minerals from their body. This can be serious. It can even be life-threatening. The body fluids must be replaced. This is done by giving small amounts of liquids often.

You may be told to give your child an **oral rehydration solution**. This is a drink that can replace lost minerals called electrolytes. The drink can be used in addition to breast or bottle feedings. It may also reduce vomiting and diarrhea. You can buy oral rehydration solution at grocery stores and drugstores. You don't need a prescription.

If a child has severe dehydration or vomiting, they may need to go to a hospital. They will then have IV (intravenous) fluids.

## Giving liquids and food

When giving oral rehydration solution:

- Only use oral rehydration solution bought in a store. Don't make your own solution. This is very important. A homemade solution may not have the right amounts of ingredients that are needed.
- If vomiting or diarrhea gets better after 2 to 3 hours, you can stop the oral rehydration solution. You can then give your child other clear liquids such as water. They can suck on ice cubes. Don't give fluids with a lot of sugar. Don't give juice or soda.
- Slowly increase the amount of clear liquids. You can alternate them with oral rehydration solution.
- If your child is a baby and you're breastfeeding, do so unless your provider tells you to stop. If you feed formula to your baby, give oral rehydration solution in small amounts. Do this for a few hours. When the vomiting eases, you may restart the formula.

For solid foods:

- If desired and tolerated, your child may eat solid food.
- Your child can start solid food 12 to 24 hours after diarrhea or vomiting has stopped. Continue to give plenty of clear liquids.
- Don't force your child to eat. Don't feed your child large amounts at a time, even if they're hungry. This can make your child feel worse. You can give your child more food over time if they can tolerate it.
- If your child's symptoms come back, go back to a simple diet or clear liquids.

Foods you can give include:

- Cereal
- Mashed potatoes
- Applesauce
- Mashed bananas
- Crackers
- Dry toast
- Rice

- Oatmeal
- Bread
- Noodles
- Pretzels
- Soups with rice or noodles
- Cooked vegetables

As your child feels better, you can try giving them lean meats and yogurt.

## Follow-up care

Follow up with your child's healthcare provider as advised. If a stool sample was taken or cultures were done, call for the results as instructed.

## Call 911

Call 911 if your child has any of these signs or symptoms:

- Trouble breathing
- Confusion
- Extreme drowsiness
- Trouble walking
- Fainting
- Fast heart rate
- Stiff neck
- Seizure

## When to get medical care

Call the healthcare provider right away if your child has any of these:

- Belly (abdominal) pain that gets worse
- Constant lower right belly pain
- Repeated vomiting after the first 2 hours on liquids
- Occasional vomiting for more than 24 hours
- More than 8 diarrhea stools within 8 hours
- Severe diarrhea for more than 24 hours
- Blood in vomit or stool
- Drinking less fluid than usual
- Dark urine or no urine for 4 to 6 hours in babies and young children, or 6 for 8 hours in older children, no tears when crying, sunken eyes, or dry mouth

- Fussiness or crying that can't be soothed
- Unusual drowsiness
- New rash
- Diarrhea lasts more than 1 week on antibiotics
- A child age 2 or older has a fever for more than 3 days
- A child of any age has repeated fevers above 104°F (40°C)

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