

Stomach Flu in Children

Stomach flu or gastroenteritis is a kind of infection in the digestive system, especially the stomach and intestines. Causes for this condition are parasite, bacteria, or virus infection spread through contaminated food and fluids. It can also be caused by certain toxins present in some plants & seafood, usage of powerful laxatives in order to cure constipation or because of intake of poisonous heavy metal or food. The problem starts with stomach upset and cramps. The child shows disinterest in eating and feels weak. Symptoms of stomach flu are diarrhea and vomiting, which take nearly five days to go away. Sometimes, even fever can accompany along with dehydration.

The child must be given fluids regularly as this will suppress other symptoms from emerging because of loss of water from the body. Loss of water and salt from the body is the biggest risk in stomach flu. Dehydration can not only worsen the condition, but can threaten the life of the child, if it isn't taken care of in the early stages. Since there is loss of salts along with the loss of water from the body, plain water won't do much. Oral rehydration solutions which are available at the local grocery or drug store, is a good idea because it has the correct combination of salts, sugar and water which can hydrate the body. These fluids come in different flavor, so that kids can have their favorite flavor and is easy to consume. The solution shouldn't be added with anything else such as sugar or water.

If a child is vomiting, solution can be administered to him using a teaspoon every two minutes. The quantity can be increased gradually. If the vomiting is more frequent, the child can be made to suck ice chips in order to supply constant fluid to the body. The solution should be given till diarrhea comes to a halt, but it is not advisable to continue it for more than twenty four hours. Some of the fluids such as soft drinks, sports drink, apple juice, tea, or chicken broth contain wrong amounts of salt, sugar & water and can make matter worse. Besides fluids, the parent shouldn't give any type of medicine without consulting a pediatrician. Fried, spicy and sugary foods aren't good in this condition. If the child isn't receiving sufficient amount of fluids he/she will show signs such as sunken eyes, dry mouth, intense thirst, unusual sleep patterns, and decrease in urine.

The more the bed rest taken by the child the better it is. The child should take complete bed rest for at least twenty four hours or till the diarrhea and vomiting stops. If the child has fever, the temperature should be checked and noted in a log, every four hours. If the temperature is very high and doesn't stop climbing, the doctor should be contacted immediately. The person who is preparing and serving food to the child should wash his or her hands very

carefully before doing so. Also, if the diarrhea and vomiting doesn't stop after twenty four hours, it is a must to get a doctor's appointment. The child should be rushed into emergency if the vomiting contains blood or green color substance.

The doctor, after doing stool and blood test, prescribes antibiotics if infection is suspected. Along with it, anti nausea medicines are also given to stop the throwing up and control fluid loss. If there is considerable loss of fluids from the child's body, the child might be admitted into the hospital and will be administered with fluids such as glucose or IV, through a tube connected to the child's veins. If the child has fever, temperature is checked and the doctor would ask about information about the temperature pattern, for which the parent should be ready. If the illness is stretched for days, a log about the information about the daily weight should also be given to the doctor. Sometimes, the blood oxygen levels would also have to be checked with the help of a pulse oximeter.

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