

DEFINITION

Vomiting is the forceful ejection of a large portion of the stomach's contents through the mouth. The mechanism is strong stomach contractions against a closed stomach outlet. By contrast, regurgitation is the effortless spitting up of one or two mouthfuls of stomach contents that is commonly seen in babies under 1 year of age.

Cause

Most vomiting is caused by a viral infection of the stomach (viral gastritis) or eating something that disagrees with your child. Often, the viral type is associated with diarrhea.

Expected Course

The vomiting usually stops in 6 to 24 hours. Dietary changes usually speed recovery. If diarrhea is present, it usually continues for several days.

HOME CARE FOR VOMITING

Special Diet for Vomiting

For Bottle-Fed Infants (less than 1 year old).

Offer oral rehydration solutions (ORS) for 8 hours.

- ORS includes Infalyte, Kao-Lectrolyte, and Pedialyte (over-the-counter products).
- For vomiting once, offer half-strength formula.
- For vomiting two or more times, offer ORS.
- Give small amounts (1 teaspoon) every 10 minutes.
- After 4 hours without vomiting, increase the amount.
- After 8 hours without vomiting, return to formula.
- For infants more than 4 months old, also return to cereal, strained bananas, etc.
- A normal diet is okay in 24 to 48 hours.

For Breast-Fed Infants. Reduce the amount per feeding.

- Provide breast milk in smaller amounts. Your goal is to avoid filling the stomach.
- If your baby vomits twice, nurse on only one side every 1 to 2 hours.
- If he vomits more than two times, nurse for 4 to 5 minutes every 30 to 60 minutes.
- After 8 hours without vomiting, return to regular breast-feeding.

For Older Children (more than 1 year old).

Offer clear fluids in small amounts for 8 hours.

- Water or ice chips are best for vomiting without diarrhea because water is directly absorbed across the stomach wall (ORS is unnecessary).

- Other options: Half-strength flat lemon-lime soda or popsicles. Stir soda until the fizz is gone because the bubbles can inflate the stomach.
- Give small amounts (1 tablespoon) every 10 minutes.
- After 4 hours without vomiting, increase the amount.
- For severe vomiting, rest the stomach completely for 1 hour, then start over with smaller amounts.
- For older children (more than 1 year old), add bland foods after 8 hours without vomiting.
- Stay on bland, starchy foods (any complex carbohydrates) for 24 hours.
- Start with saltine crackers, white bread, rice, mashed potatoes, etc.
- A normal diet is okay in 24 to 48 hours.

Sleep. Help your child go to sleep. Sleep often empties the stomach and relieves the need to vomit. Your child doesn't have to drink anything if he feels nauseated.

Medicines. Discontinue all medicines for 8 hours. Oral medicines can irritate the stomach and make vomiting worse. If your child has a fever over 102°F (38.9°C), use acetaminophen suppositories. Call our office if your child needs to be taking a prescription medicine.

Common Mistakes in Treatment of Vomiting. A common error is to give as much clear fluid as your child wants rather than gradually increasing the amount. This almost always leads to continued vomiting. Keep in mind that there is no effective drug or suppository for vomiting and that diet therapy is the answer. Vomiting alone rarely causes dehydration unless you give drugs by mouth, milk, or too much clear fluid.



CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY if

- Any signs of dehydration occur (no urine in over 8 hours, very dry mouth, etc.).
- Any blood appears in the vomited material.
- Abdominal pain develops and lasts more than 4 hours.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

Within 24 hours if

- The vomiting continues for more than 24 hours in children under age 2 or for more than 48 hours if over age 2.
- You have other concerns or questions.