

SICKNESS AND DIARRHOEA IN BABIES & CHILDREN

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING IN BABIES

Most babies have occasional loose stools (poo).
Breastfed babies have looser stools than formula-fed babies.
Diarrhoea is when your baby frequently passes unformed watery stools.



Diarrhoea can be caused by an infection and may be accompanied by vomiting. This is called gastroenteritis (a stomach bug). It's usually caused by a virus, such as [rotavirus](#). Most stomach bugs are more common in formula-fed than breastfed babies.



If your baby comes into contact with other family members or people (for example, at nursery) who have a stomach bug, ask them to wash their hands using liquid soap in warm running water, and drying their hands, frequently.

Keep toilets clean and wash towels frequently. With formula-fed babies, make sure that bottles are sterilised extremely carefully.

Diarrhoea and vomiting are more serious in babies than older children because babies can easily lose too much fluid from their bodies and become dehydrated. They may become lethargic or irritable, have a dry mouth, and have loose, pale or mottled skin; their eyes and fontanelle (the soft spot on the top of their head) may become sunken. If they become dehydrated they may not pass much urine. They may lose their appetite and have cold hands and feet. It may be difficult to tell how much urine they're passing when they have diarrhoea.

If your baby becomes dehydrated they will need extra fluids. You can buy oral rehydration fluids from your local pharmacy or chemist, or get a prescription from your GP. Brands include Dioralyte, Electrolade and Rehidrat.

Contact your GP or health visitor urgently for advice if your baby has passed six or more diarrhoeal stools in the past 24 hours, or if your baby has vomited three times or more in the past 24 hours. Get expert advice. If your baby is unwell (is less responsive, feverish or is not passing much urine), or if vomiting has lasted more than a day, get your GP's advice straightaway.

General advice:

- Give extra fluids. Give your baby oral rehydration fluids in between feeds or after each watery stool.
- Do not stop giving your baby milk. Give the extra fluid as an addition to milk.
- Make sure everyone in your family washes their hands regularly with soap and warm water to avoid spreading the infection.
- Don't share towels.
- Don't take your baby swimming in a swimming pool for two weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.

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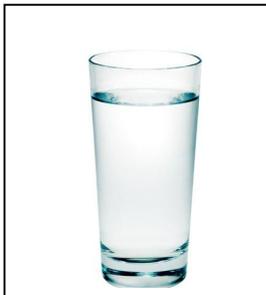


DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING IN TODDLERS AND OLDER CHILDREN

Some children between the ages of one and five pass frequent, smelly, loose stools that may contain recognisable foods, such as carrots and peas. Usually, these children are otherwise perfectly healthy and are growing normally, but the GP can't find any cause. This type of diarrhoea is known as toddler diarrhoea.

Contact your GP if:

- your child has diarrhoea and is vomiting at the same time
- your child has diarrhoea that's particularly watery, has blood in it or lasts for longer than two or three days
- your child has severe or continuous stomach ache



Otherwise, diarrhoea isn't usually a cause for concern. Give your child **plenty of clear drinks** (such as water or clear broth) to replace the fluid that's been lost, but avoid fruit juice or squash, as these drinks can cause diarrhoea. Only give your child food if they want it.

Don't give anti-diarrhoeal drugs as they can be dangerous. Oral rehydration treatment can help.

You can help to prevent any infection spreading by using separate towels for your child and reminding everyone in the family to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating.

Don't return your child to their school or childcare facility until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.

Don't allow children to swim in swimming pools for two weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.