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# Gastroenteritis

## Paediatrics Department



# Gastroenteritis

## Definition

Bowel infection causing diarrhoea +/- vomiting.

The vomiting usually settles within a day or so, but diarrhoea may go on for more than a week. Most cases are caused by a virus, but occasionally a bacterium may be responsible.

There is no specific treatment for viral gastroenteritis, but occasionally antibiotics are needed if a bacterium is isolated from a stool culture. Babies and young children are vulnerable to infection as their immune systems are still developing and babies can become unwell relatively quickly because of fluid loss.

## Signs and Symptoms

- Feeling unwell, off food and drink
- Vomiting in the first 24-48 hours
- Diarrhoea lasting up to 10 days
- Stomach pains
- Fever
- Dehydration-dry mouth and lips, drowsiness, cold hands and feet, passing less urine than usual

## Treatment

Avoid dehydration by giving small frequent amounts of fluid at home. Continue breastfeeding, but smaller frequent feeds.

Fluid can be given as Dioralyte which contains salt and sugar as well as water to replace the fluid lost through vomiting or

diarrhoea. This should be given for up to 4 hours until the vomiting settles and then the child should have a normal light diet.

Extra clear fluid should be offered to replace fluid lost through ongoing diarrhoea. Children may not want to eat initially. This is not a problem as long as the child is able to tolerate fluids.

Avoid spread of infection by careful hand washing and avoiding contact with others until 48 hours after the last vomit or episode of diarrhoea.

## When to seek medical help

- If the vomiting and diarrhoea persists and the child is unable to tolerate oral fluid-this is not the same as not wanting to drink.
- It may be necessary to syringe fluid into the child's mouth.
- Diarrhoea persisting for more than 10 days.
- If you think your child is dehydrated e.g. not passing urine, pale and losing weight, sunken eyes, cold hands and feet or very drowsy.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Blood in the stool.
- Green vomit.

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## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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