

Child seen on: Date..... Time

By:*(please include designation)*

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Gastroenteritis in children < 5 yrs

Parent information
for Acute Gastroenteritis

What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and gut that can cause diarrhoea and vomiting. Most attacks are caused by viruses, are mild, and can usually be managed at home.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Your child may have some, or all of the following – diarrhoea, vomiting, tummy ache and fever. One of the main risks of gastroenteritis in children and especially babies is that they may become dehydrated. However by following simple advice to give fluids regularly most children can be safely managed at home. The vomiting may last up to three days, whereas diarrhoea usually lasts five to seven days and may continue for up to 2 weeks.

Your child's condition may change, and you should get further advice from your doctor or NHS Direct if your child is either:

- very hot (temperature over 39 degrees)
- not improving after 48 hours
- getting irritable or restless
- getting more thirsty despite treatment
- in constant pain from their stomach/ abdomen
- passing blood in the diarrhoea
- showing signs of dehydration (dry mouth and tongue/not passing urine/sunken eyes)

NHS Direct More information is available on the NHS Direct website www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or call **0845 4646**

Things you should do if your child has gastroenteritis

The most important thing is to replace fluid that your child is losing through their sickness and diarrhoea.

If you are breast feeding, continue with this. Try to feed little and often. If bottle feeding this should also continue, but offer extra fluids such as water or rehydration drinks, for example dioralyte and electrolade, giving small sips every few minutes (a teaspoon, or 5mls, every 5 minutes for an infant).

Reintroduce solid food slowly when the vomiting has settled, starting with plain foods like toast, biscuits, pasta or soup.

Things you should not do

- Do not starve your child
- Do not give fizzy drinks or 'flat' cola
- Do not give sugary/high energy drinks
- Do not worry if your child will not eat solid food straight away

Prevention

Most children get gastroenteritis at some time, no matter how high the standards of hygiene at home. Always encourage your child to wash their hands with soap after visiting the toilet and before handling food.

If your child has got gastroenteritis, prevent spread to others by:

- Washing your hands after changing a nappy
- Not sharing towels or flannels
- Cleaning the toilet with disinfectant
- Not letting your child help to prepare food for others

Keep your child away from public places for 48 hours after the symptoms have settled.

Your child should not go swimming until at least 2 weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.

If travelling abroad, make sure your child has had any recommended vaccines.