



Diarrhea and Vomiting

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is when your usual *pattern* (when you have bowel movements), *consistency* (loose or hard bowel movements), and *number* of bowel movements increases or changes. Diarrhea is usually a sign of illness. Diarrhea may be caused by a virus or other infection in your intestines (the gut), or it may be caused by an infection somewhere else in the body, such as an ear infection or cold.

What is vomiting?

Vomiting is the forceful throwing up of everything in the stomach. It is not the same thing as the occasional spitting up that babies do while taking formula. Like diarrhea, it can be a sign of illness elsewhere or it can be the first sign of illness in the gut.

Should I contact my child's health care provider?

Yes, if your child has one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- bloody diarrhea or vomit
- refuses to eat or drink for more than a few hours
- moderate or severe dehydration (the loss of body fluids)
 - decreased urine (less than one wet diaper or void in 6 hours)
 - lack of tears when crying
 - dry mouth
 - swollen eyes
- abdominal pain that comes and goes or is severe
- fever of 102°F (39°C) or greater
- fever of 101°F (38.4°C) for more than 3 days
- change in behavior (less alert, less responsive, lethargic or tired)

With diarrhea or vomiting, the risk of dehydration is more serious for younger children. Therefore, babies should be checked more often than older children.

How can I help my child?

For children who are not dehydrated offer a regular diet. Diet may include:

- full strength cow's milk products (only avoid these if child has milk allergies)
- complex carbohydrates (rice, wheat, potatoes, bread)
- lean meats
- yogurt
- fruits and vegetables
- oral rehydration solution (Pedialyte®) if recommended by your health care provider

Avoid:

- high fat foods
- only clear liquid
- beverages with high sugar content

For infants who are breastfeeding, continue unless healthcare provider says not to.

Other tips:

- Do not give your child fatty foods such as hamburgers, french fries, potato chips or sugary foods (e.g., soda, sports drinks like Gatorade®, Jell-O or juice unless mixed with water) until the bowel movements are normal and vomiting has stopped.
- DO NOT GIVE YOUR CHILD ANY MEDICINES FOR DIARRHEA unless directed to do so by your child's health care provider.

School/Child Care attendance:

Children should be excluded from school or child care when there is a sudden onset of diarrhea, seen by an increased number of bowel movements compared to the child's normal pattern and with increased water in the stool. They should also be excluded for two or more episodes of vomiting within a 12 hour period.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777.