

Surviving Vomiting and Diarrhea

WHAT ARE VOMITING AND DIARRHEA?

Vomiting begins when the stomach pushes foods or liquids up through the mouth. Diarrhea is the sudden increase in the looseness and number of bowel movements. Viruses are the most common cause of vomiting and/or diarrhea.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

VOMITING

- Nausea
- Dry heaves
- Stomach pain and tenderness
- Stomach cramping
- Paleness in the face

DIARRHEA

- Loose or watery stools
- Generally not feeling well

HOW LONG AFTER CONTACT CAN ILLNESS DEVELOP?

The cause of the illness will depend on when it begins after contact.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Viral causes of vomiting and diarrhea are spread by direct contact of germs from the skin, body fluids, items we touch and by germs that come from the mouth while coughing and sneezing. Vomiting and diarrhea may be caused by other illnesses.

WHEN IS THE CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?

A child may spread the virus before symptoms begin and as symptoms are taking place. Fever is a sign that the illness can still spread. Remember that depending on the cause, vomiting and/or diarrhea may not spread to others.

WHEN CAN THE CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Your child may return to school 24 hours after the diarrhea and vomiting have stopped or after cleared by a doctor.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT SPREADING INFECTION?

Good hand washing, proper disposal of dirty tissues, and no sharing of drinks, forks, knives or spoons decrease spreading. The child should stay at home until all symptoms are gone.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Vomiting should be treated first. Treatment for diarrhea should begin after your child has had no vomiting for six hours. For vomiting, start with small amounts of clear liquids: one teaspoon or one tablespoon every 10 minutes doubling the amount each hour. Children may have ice chips or equal parts of Gatorade mixed with water, regular gelatins or Popsicles. Other acceptable fluids are Sprite, 7UP or any other caffeine-free, non-diet soft drinks. Pour the soft drink into a glass and let the fizz disappear. If your child vomits using this treatment, then rest the stomach for one more hour. Then start over with the last amount he was able to keep down. After six hours without vomiting, slowly increase to a bland diet. To help with the diarrhea, a bland diet may include saltine crackers, chicken broth or chicken noodle soup, rice, applesauce or bananas. After the next six hours if no vomiting occurs, start a normal diet.

This general healthcare information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting your child's healthcare provider. If you need further assistance, call 404-250-KIDS to speak to a pediatric nurse. For more information check out our Web site at www.choa.org and click on "medical library," "for professionals" or "for parents."