



Information Sheets for Parents – Health Fact Sheet

Vomiting and/or Diarrhoea

National Quality Standard – Quality Area 2

Element 2.1.2 – Health Practices and Procedures – Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

Description:

Gastroenteritis (Gastro) is an illness triggered by the infection and inflammation of the digestive system. Typical symptoms include abdominal cramps, diarrhoea (an increase in the frequency, runniness or volume of faeces) and/or vomiting. In many cases, it does not need treatment, and symptoms disappear in a few days. Gastroenteritis can cause dehydration because of the large amount of fluid lost through vomiting and diarrhoea.

How does it spread?

Gastrointestinal diseases spread when the germ enters the body by the mouth. This can happen when:

- people eat contaminated food or drink contaminated water
- infected people do not wash their hands effectively after using the toilet—contaminated hands can then contaminate food that may be eaten by others, or surfaces that other people may touch before touching their mouth

Incubation period:

Viral and bacterial gastroenteritis usually take 1–3 days for symptoms to appear. Symptoms of parasitic gastroenteritis can take 5–15 days to appear.

Infectious period:

People are infectious for as long as the germs are present in their faeces. The germs causing gastroenteritis can be in faeces even if the person does not have any symptoms, or after the symptoms have stopped.

Exclusion period:

Children, educators and other staff with infectious diarrhoea should be excluded until the diarrhoea has stopped for at least 48 hours

Responsibilities of parents:

- Keep the child at home until they are feeling well and have not had any symptoms for at least 48 hours.
- Encourage effective hand hygiene at home.
- Keep siblings away from the centre if they have Gastro
- Keep away from centre if parent has Gastro

Controlling the spread of infection:

- Ensure that adults or children who are ill are excluded for the appropriate period.
- Teach and encourage children to always practise appropriate hand hygiene.

Treatment:

The main risk of gastroenteritis is dehydration, especially in children. People with vomiting and/or diarrhoea need extra fluid to replace what they lose through vomiting and diarrhoea. However, many fluids have too much sugar and the wrong amount of salt—giving an ill child the wrong kind of fluid can cause more diarrhoea and dehydration.

Safe drinks

The best fluids to give contain a mixture of special salts (electrolytes) and sugars. You can buy oral rehydration solution from the chemist. Mix the sachet of powder with water (not any other kind of fluid) according to the manufacturer's instructions

Reintroducing food

Reintroduce food within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms, even if the diarrhoea has not settled. Suitable foods to start off with include bread, plain biscuits, potatoes, rice, noodles, vegetables, plain meats, and fish. Gradually reintroduce other foods, such as dairy foods, and sweet foods, such as jelly, honey and jam

For further information: [Staying Healthy in Child Care](#)