

Vomiting

Brief Version

What causes vomiting?

When your child throws up, it is often caused by a virus. Your child may also have watery bowel movements (diarrhea). Most of the time, vomiting stops in 6 to 24 hours. The diarrhea may keep going for a day or 2 more.

How can I take care of my child?

- 1. Give clear fluids for 8 hours.** Give 1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon of clear fluid every 5 minutes. After 4 hours, double the amount each hour.
 - **For babies under 1 year old.** Give your baby a clear fluid drink like Pedialyte or Kao Lectrolyte. These drinks help give your baby important minerals that can be lost when throwing up and sick. Until you can get some, give formula 1 tsp at a time. If your child also has diarrhea, use Pedialyte.
 - **For breast-fed babies.** If you are breast-feeding and your baby has thrown up more than once, continue breast-feeding, but nurse on only one side for 10 minutes every 1 to 2 hours. If your baby has thrown up 3 or more times, nurse for 4 to 5 minutes every 30 to 60 minutes.
 - **For toddlers over 1 year old.** The best clear fluid is water or ice chips.
 - **For children over 2 years old.** Give your child water or ice chips. You can also give your child flat, lemon-lime soda. Make a drink of half water and half soda.
- 2. Give bland foods 8 hours after your child stops throwing up.**
 - Babies who eat solid food can have applesauce, strained bananas and rice cereal.
 - Older children can have saltine crackers, cereals, bland soups, and mashed potatoes, or honey on white bread.
 - Give the bland foods for 24 hours.
- 3. Do not give medicine your child doesn't need.** Do not give any medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child shows signs of not getting enough fluids (does not urinate (pee) in 8 hours, has a very dry mouth, has no tears when he cries).
- Your child vomits repeatedly AND also has watery diarrhea.
- Your child starts to act very sick.

Call your doctor during office hours if:

- Your child is under age 2 and throws up for more than 24 hours.
- Your child is over age 2 and throws up for more than 48 hours.
- You have other concerns or questions.

Written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D., author of "Your Child's Health," Bantam Books.

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