

Self Care - Diarrhoea and Vomiting

What causes diarrhoea and vomiting?

There are many causes, but most commonly diarrhoea and vomiting are caused by viral infections or by eating food that has gone off. Diarrhoea is often accompanied by a cramp-like pain in the tummy which comes and goes. You may also have a temperature. Diarrhoea and vomiting are unpleasant but rarely dangerous; most attacks usually begin to get better within 48 hours, but can take up to 7 days to clear.

How can it be treated?

Medication is very rarely required. Take plenty of clear fluids (water or very dilute juice). "Rehydration drinks" are not usually needed. It is OK to eat as soon as the vomiting is under control, if you feel hungry. There is no evidence to suggest that not eating will shorten episodes of diarrhoea. Simple foods that are high in carbohydrates, such as bread, rice or pasta are recommended.

When do I need to see a Doctor?

- If a child under 1 year old is suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting
- If it does not begin to settle within 48 hours, or lasts longer than 7 days
- If there is continuous pain rather than separate bouts of stomach cramp
- If an attack comes shortly after a visit to a foreign country
- If the vomiting is so bad you are unable to keep any fluids down
- If there is blood in the diarrhoea
- If the patient suffers repeated attacks.

Coming to the doctor's surgery with diarrhoea and vomiting risks infecting other patients who may have weak immune systems and be less able to cope with the infection than you. Ask for a telephone consultation instead.

To avoid spreading the infection, make sure you:

- Always wash your hands after going to the toilet and before eating - encourage your children to do the same
- Thoroughly clean the potty or toilet using disinfectant after each episode of diarrhoea and vomiting. Make sure that you include the handle and the seat
- Do not share towels, flannels, or cutlery with other members of your household.

How long should I stay off work or school?

Until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea OR vomiting. Remember a medical certificate (or "sick note") is NOT required for the first 7 days of any illness.

Source www.nhs.uk and www.webmentorlibrary.com

If you would like further advice contact NHS Direct on 08454647 or see www.nhs.uk



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