



Vomiting in babies and children

Advice for parents and guardians from the
Health Service Executive (HSE)

Source: www2.hse.ie/conditions/vomiting-babies-children/

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Vomiting in babies and children

It's normal for babies to vomit a small amount after feeding.

Call your GP immediately if your child has:

- vomited more than 3 times in the past 24 hours
- been vomiting for more than 3 days
- shown signs of dehydration
- recently returned from travelling abroad and is vomiting more than usual
- a high temperature - 38°C for babies under 3 months, or 39°C for babies over 3 months
- severe tummy pain
- bloody, brown, or green vomit

Call 999 for an ambulance immediately if:

- your child has a headache, stiff neck, rash, and is vomiting

Caring for a child who is vomiting

In most cases you can care for your child at home. You can give them liquid paracetamol if they have a high temperature or stomach pains.

Do not worry if your child doesn't want to eat. It's more important that they drink plenty of fluids, such as water or broth. Don't give them fruit juice and fizzy drinks until they're feeling better.

It's not safe to dilute baby formula. Make up the bottles as normal and give your baby extra water or drinks in addition to their milk feeds.

Breastfeeding or formula fed babies

If your child is still breastfeeding or formula fed, continue giving them their normal feeds. If you're breastfeeding, your baby may look for more frequent breastfeeds when they are sick. There is no need to give your baby additional fluids.

There are more demands on a mother when caring for a sick baby, rest as much as possible and keep your baby close to you.

Dehydration

Vomiting can cause your child to become dehydrated. It's important that they drink plenty of fluids.

Ask your pharmacist about an oral rehydration solution. Take your child to your GP if you're worried that they're becoming dehydrated.

Signs of severe dehydration in babies and children include:

- fewer wet nappies
- drowsiness or being hard to wake
- pale or blotchy skin
- cold hands and feet

Important

Take your child to the nearest hospital emergency department immediately if they show any signs of severe dehydration.

Causes

Vomiting can be caused by common infections like gastroenteritis (infectious diarrhoea).

More serious causes include:

- infections like meningitis, pneumonia and urinary tract infections
- gastro-oesophageal reflux
- milk intolerance or food allergies
- conditions that affect the intestines, such as pyloric stenosis or intussusception
- strangulated hernia
- appendicitis

Call your GP or go to a hospital immediately if:

- you think your child's vomiting could be caused by something serious.

Bring your child to the nearest emergency department if they have pain that gets worse quickly and spreads across their tummy.

Poison

Call the National Poison Information Centre immediately if you think your child has swallowed something poisonous.

National Poison Information Centre

(01) 809 2166

Opening hours: 8am to 10pm (7 days a week)

Outside these hours, contact your hospital or GP for out-of-hours services. In an emergency, call 999.

Stop vomiting from spreading

Vomiting infections are highly contagious.

Wash your and your child's hands in soap and warm water, and dry them thoroughly:

- before and after taking care of anyone who's unwell
- after cleaning up when someone has been sick or had diarrhoea
- after going to the toilet or helping your child to go
- after changing your baby's nappy
- after handling raw meat, rubbish, an animal or their poo
- before eating
- whenever your hands look dirty

You can also:

- clean surfaces well using detergent and hot water
- wash soiled bedding and clothes at a high temperature
- wash or throw away any cleaning equipment used
- never let sick people prepare food
- make sure your sick child never shares towels with others

Important

Keep your child at home and don't send them back to crèche, pre-school, or school until at least 48 hours have passed since they last vomited.