

### **What is Gastroenteritis?**

Gastroenteritis is usually caused by a viral infection, most commonly Rotavirus, Adenovirus or Norovirus. Vomiting usually lasts for 1-2 days and diarrhoea for 5-7 days. You should seek further advice from healthcare professional if your child's symptoms do not resolve by these times.

Most children can be safely managed at home. Usual feeds, including breast or other milk feeds should be continued. Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids, avoiding fizzy drinks and fruit juice.

### **Children who are more at risk of becoming dehydrated.**

- Children less than 1 year, particularly those less than 6 months or who had a low birth weight.
- Children who have passed more than five diarrhoeal stools in previous 24 hours.
- Children who have vomited more than twice in the previous 24 hours.

- Children who are already significantly underweight.

These children should be offered Oral Rehydration Solution (Dioralyte) in addition to other fluids.

### **The following symptoms may indicate dehydration:**

- Appearing to get more unwell
- Becoming more irritable or lethargic
- Decreased urine output – fewer or lighter wet nappies, older child passing less urine than normal.
- Pale or mottled skin
- Cold fingers/toes

If you have been told or believe your child is dehydrated and they are not tolerating oral fluids, or you have concerns that they are becoming dehydrated, you should contact a healthcare professional such as your GP, NHS 111, local minor Injuries Unit or return to the Emergency Department.

### **Oral Fluid Rehydration**

If you have been told that your child is dehydrated by a doctor or nurse you can use the oral rehydration advice provided to guide you in giving the correct amounts of fluid (ideally Oral Rehydration Solution) in frequent, small amounts to rehydrate him/her.

Your child's weight .....KG

Give .....mls every 10minutes for first hour.

If tolerating this amount gradually increase to .....mls every 10 minutes for next four hours.

### **After rehydration**

Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids, including breast or milk feeds if they were stopped. Avoid fizzy drinks and fruit juice until diarrhoea has stopped. Reintroduce usual diet. Offer a small drink of Oral Rehydration Solution after each large watery stool if your child is at increased risk of dehydration.

## Preventing the spread of diarrhoea and vomiting.

- Thorough washing of hands with soap (liquid if possible) and warm running water and drying.
- Hands should be washed after going to the toilet (children) or changing nappies (parents/carers), and before preparing, serving and eating food.
- Towels used by infected children should not be shared.
- Children should not attend or return to school or other child care facility until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting.
- Children should not swim in swimming pools for 2 weeks after the last episode of diarrhoea.

**For more**

## Information Contact:

**Short Stay**

**Paediatric**

**Assessment Unit**

**Telephone:**

**01803 655492**

**08:30 to 21:00**

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



**Torbay and South Devon**  
NHS Foundation Trust

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Gastroenteritis: Information for Parents About

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