

Information for Parents and Carers

Diarrhoea and Vomiting

This information leaflet has been produced to provide you with general information about diarrhoea and/or vomiting and aims to answer any further questions that you may have.

What is gastroenteritis?

Diarrhoea (watery poo) and sickness is sometimes called **gastroenteritis** and is common in small children. It is usually caused by a bacteria or a virus and will quickly settle after running its course, without specific treatment, rather like a cold.

The length of the illness varies from child to child.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Vomiting fluids and/or solid food
- Frequent stools that may be fluid, slimy and unusual in colour and smell
- A raised temperature
- Feeling sick
- Back ache / tummy ache. The pain may be sharp, occurring before each bout of diarrhoea.
- Listless, disinterested and pale

What can I do to help?

- Give any clear fluid that, the child will take, in small and frequent amounts. A breast fed baby should continue to be offered breast milk.
- Offer your child re-hydrating drinks e.g. Dioralyte, and follow the instructions supplied in the box. This can be obtained without prescription from most pharmacies.
- Keep giving fluids. This can be difficult if a child refuses, or is still being sick. Do carry on even if it is only a mouthful at a time, as some of the fluid will be absorbed. In a child under one year try water or baby juices. In older children try water, fruit squash, iced lollies or 'flat' cola.
- If the child asks for food, give something light e.g. toast or a plain biscuit
- If the child has a raised temperature or sharp pains, Paracetamol (Calpol) can be given. Ibuprofen, if recommended by the doctor or pharmacist, can be used to help bring down your child's temperature if Paracetamol is not effective. It can be used by itself or in-between doses of Paracetamol. Ibuprofen should not be used in children with asthma or kidney disease. Always follow the instructions on the bottle and do not give more than four doses in 24 hours.
- It may take up to ten days or longer to settle down and as long as the child is not getting worse, there is no need to worry.

- Most children with diarrhoea and vomiting should not need antibiotics or other medicines.
- School age children may return to school or nursery 48 hours after the diarrhoea and /or vomiting has stopped and if you feel they are well enough.
- Children should not swim in swimming pools for two weeks following the last episode of diarrhoea

Prevent diarrhoea and vomiting in the future and prevent spread to other family members and friends.

- Wash hands after: using the toilet, changing nappies, and before preparing, serving and eating food
- For babies under one year, bottles, teats, cups and bowls etc should be washed and sterilised.
- Towels used by infected children should not be shared.
- Ensure food is used by the 'use before date', heat food thoroughly, store food at the recommended temperature and keep it covered.

Seek advice if:

- Your child will not take fluids, continues to be sick and becomes more listless (tired).
- Your child's urine output is reduced.
- Your child has a high temperature that will not come down after giving paracetamol and ibuprofen.
- Vomiting or diarrhoea becomes more frequent.
- You notice blood in your child's vomit or diarrhoea
- Your child becomes very distressed when opening their bowels.

Dial 999 for an ambulance if your child becomes very drowsy, difficult to wake, is unresponsive or floppy.

Who to contact:

- You can contact your family doctor or GP.
- Or you can take your child to the nearest walk-in centre.
- You can also take your child to the nearest A&E Department.

This leaflet was compiled by: The C.A.N.I Team.

Date: February 2013

Review date: February 2015