



## Oral rehydration solutions

These solutions can be purchased at the pharmacy in liquid form, in gelatin or as a powder that must be dissolved in water according to the instructions on the package. Since they contain mineral salts, they are better accepted when cold.

**It's a good idea to keep them at home together with the medications you commonly use.**

Water, sugary drinks, fruit juice and soft drinks in general are not suitable for correct rehydration because they do not contain the minerals that are lost with diarrhoea.

### Before calling the paediatrician, note the following:

- The number and characteristics of vomiting episodes (*colour of vomit, if vomit contains mucus or blood, if vomiting is projectile, if preceded by pallor and/or nausea, if triggered by cough*).
- The number, quantity, colour and consistency of the stools.
- Check whether your child is urinating (*check that his/her nappy is wet*), whether his/her crying is accompanied by tears, and whether he/she is drowsy or instead wants to play.

- Check that the child continues to drink frequent sips of the oral rehydration solution and later also still water.

It is normal for the child to have a poor appetite for a few days: **the important thing is that he/she continues to drink!**

Knowing your child's latest weight reading is very helpful.

### When to go to the emergency room

- **If vomiting is so intense and continuous that your child cannot drink oral rehydration solutions.**
- If your child is unresponsive, tends to fall asleep, urinates less and less (a sign of severe dehydration) or refuses to drink
- If vomit is greenish in colour or repeatedly contains blood (vomit is usually clear or yellowish in colour).
- ***If your child is less than 6 months old and vomits and/or has diarrhoea repeatedly (newborns and nursing babies can easily become dehydrated).***
- **If a significant quantity of blood appears in the stools and/or if they repeatedly contain blood.**

## Vomiting and diarrhoea (gastroenteritis)

*Informative pamphlet written and shared by primary care paediatricians and hospital-based paediatricians of the healthcare authority Azienda USL - IRCCS of Reggio Emilia*



## Introduction

Vomiting and diarrhoea are very common symptoms in children, which can occur individually or together.

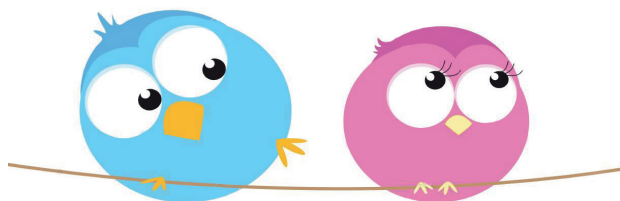
If a gastrointestinal infection (gastroenteritis) is contracted, vomiting usually appears first and is generally associated with stomach ache and/or fever.

Vomiting usually subsides in 6/8 hours, but diarrhoea can last for as long as 3-5 days. **Dehydration** (excessive loss of fluids) is the most feared and dangerous complication of these ailments - all the more so when the child is very young.

The most important treatment is **rehydration by mouth**, which must begin as soon as possible with **oral rehydration solutions**.

The more solution your child drinks, the better it is.

He/she should resume regular eating as soon as possible with simple food. Fatty foods should be avoided.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

### If your child is vomiting

- If the general condition of your child is good, and he behaves in the usual way between vomiting episodes, you can adopt a wait-and-see attitude because vomiting often occurs only during the first few hours of a feverish illness, and happens only a few times.
- About 30 minutes after the vomiting episode, start rehydration by mouth. Offer small quantities of cold rehydration solution (preferred as the salty flavour is lost a bit): 5 ml (one teaspoonful) every 5 minutes, and increase gradually according to what your child can tolerate.
- If you are breastfeeding or using formula, continue with smaller and more frequent feeds.
- Suspend food for 2-3 hours after vomiting begins, to let your child's stomach "rest". Let your child resume eating when he/she feels like it and has not vomited for at least 3-4 hours. Offer small quantities of dry, light, *simple foods (avoid fatty or fancy foods, difficult to digest)*.
- Do not administer drugs which treat vomiting (which are usually ineffective) without asking your doctor first.

### If your child has diarrhoea

- The main treatment is to give oral rehydration solutions to replace the fluids and minerals being lost, and to continue usual feeding with small quantities of food, if accepted.
- Breastfeeding should never be interrupted and formula milk should be kept at the normal concentration. It may be useful for the infant to have smaller and more frequent feeds, always alternating with the oral rehydration solution.
- Do not offer sugary drinks (such as fruit juice or tea with sugar). Wash hands frequently to reduce the risk of contagion.
- It is not at all recommended to self-medicate with drugs to prevent diarrhoea or antibiotics (*most of the time not useful and not recommended for children due to the risk of side effects*): these drugs must be prescribed by a doctor if necessary.