

Vomiting and diarrhoea

Info for parents

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Contact

Tel. 09 332 27 42

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1 What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis (also called “stomach flu”) is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines. The condition is usually caused by viruses (such as rotavirus, adenovirus or norovirus and many others). Sometimes a bacterium is the cause. These pathogens can easily be transmitted via faeces and/or vomiting. Which is why it is important to always wash your hands after using the toilet.

2 Treatment

- Usually stomach flu ends on its own, provided that no signs of dehydration occur. Antibiotics are rarely needed. Diarrhoea inhibitors are not effective and can sometimes have serious side effects. If your child uses diarrhoea inhibitors, pathogens – whether viruses or bacteria – cannot leave the body. As a result, the disease lasts longer.
- With mild symptoms you do not need to adjust your child’s diet. If you are breastfeeding, you can continue as normal. You may allow your child to feed more often. Babies who receive bottle feeding can continue with normal feeding. The contents should not be diluted. Older children may also continue to eat and drink normally. However, avoid fruit juices.
- To prevent dehydration, it is important that your child receives sufficient fluids. The body loses a lot of moisture and salts due to diarrhoea. You can supplement these with an ORS (Oral Rehydration Solution), a special liquid with the right mix of salts and sugars. ORS is available at any pharmacy without a prescription.

2.1 Taking an ORS

- You must dissolve the ORS in water. Follow the instructions on the package. If you have dissolved the product well, it will taste salty, a bit like tears. If it tastes really salty, verify that you have followed the instructions properly.
- Your child needs approximately 10 ml ORS per kilogramme body weight after each diaper change (see diagram below). Often a child can simply drink the ORS. If you are breastfeeding you can breastfeed your child more often and also give the ORS in a bottle. Even when children vomit, they can usually easily absorb ORS. It is important, however, to give small amounts very regularly. This naturally requires time and attention, but the vomiting usually lasts no longer than one or two days.

2.2 Treatment in the case of hospitalisation

Occasionally, admission to the hospital is necessary, for example if your child loses a lot of fluid and is unable to drink the ORS sufficiently or continues to vomit. Then we can administer ORS via a stomach

tube. A stomach tube is a tube that runs through the nose to the stomach. If your child continues to vomit or is severely dehydrated, we must administer fluid through an infusion.

2.3 Advice regarding liquid intake (to be filled in by the doctor)

Liquid intake advice for your child: ml/24 hours

	Mild dehydration	Moderate dehydration
	ml over 4 to 6 hours in frequent small amounts (50-75 ml/kg). Follow-up afterwards with a doctor.
In the case of vomitingml/occurrence (2 ml/kg)ml/occurrence (2 ml/kg)
In the case of diarrhoeaml/occurrence (10 ml/kg)ml/occurrence (10 ml/kg)

3 When to consult a doctor?

Dehydration is the most common problem with gastroenteritis.

The symptoms of dehydration are weight loss, less urination, drowsiness, sunken eyes, dry skin, dry mucous membranes (mouth), thirst.

Furthermore, it is possible that your child appears sick, does not want to eat and/or drink, does not feel like playing, is listless and weepy, is easily irritated.

If your child has these symptoms or if you are concerned, consult a doctor.

4 Prevention

As long as your child still has diarrhoea, there is a risk of passing on the infection. Everyone who has contact with your child should wash their hands regularly, especially after contact with body fluids.

5 Contact

The Paediatrics Department of University Hospital Ghent offers third-line care. This means that care is provided for complex disorders. The number of hospital beds at the Paediatrics Department is therefore limited. If your child needs to be admitted, we are able to arrange admission to another hospital. Thus we advise you to choose your own doctor/paediatrician who can monitor your child and refer the child to us if necessary.

For urgent questions:

- Emergency Department University Hospital Ghent: tel. 09 332 27 42
- Paediatrician on duty at University Hospital Ghent: tel. 09 332 35 15

For **urgent** medical help, come to the Emergency Department.

For **immediate** medical help, call 112.

This information does not replace consultation with a doctor and is also available in other languages.