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VOMITING

Vomiting can result from many causes. One common reason that children vomit is due to a viral infection of the gastrointestinal tract, known as *gastroenteritis*. This infection may manifest as vomiting, diarrhea, or both. (Sometimes infants “spit up” after a feeding, or with a burp. This is *not* vomiting.)

Most *virally-induced* vomiting will stop in twelve to twenty-four hours. If diarrhea follows, it may last several days. While we cannot ‘cure’ viral infections, proper management will prevent dehydration and avoid the need for hospitalization or emergency department visits.

To manage repeated vomiting, we recommend the following:

- Give nothing by mouth for at least 2 hours.
(Nothing means nothing: no ice chips, water, or even hard candy).
 - Do not waken to give fluids. If your child is sleeping comfortably, and not vomiting or having diarrhea, his or her hydration status will not worsen (because your child is not losing significant amounts while asleep.) Sleep is an ideal time to allow the GI tract to rest.
 - On the other hand, if your child has been deteriorating and has lost consciousness and becomes *unarousable* (and is not merely sleeping), we need to hear from you.
- 1 After two hours, Go slowly! Give *small amounts* (½ ounce, or 15 ml) of Pedialyte® or an equivalent fluid (breast milk can be used for breast fed infants) every 10 to 15 minutes, for two hours. DO NOT GIVE WATER. *Proceed very slowly*. Children can be difficult to slow down if they are very thirsty, but slow replenishment is important. (A medicine dropper or a medicine cup can be used with young children.)
 - 2 In the third hour, give 1 ounce (= 30 ml) every 10 to 15 minutes.
 - 3 If no vomiting occurs during these three hours, slowly allow your child to drink Pedialyte® ad lib (as your child wants). *If your child vomits during this time, begin again with nothing by mouth.*
 - 4 If there has been no vomiting for four to six hours, gradually add *small amounts* of solid foods, such as rice cereal mixed with water for infants; dry cereal, dry crackers, or dry toast for older children.

- 5 After 12 hours of no vomiting in formula fed infants, begin providing half-strength formula. (Half strength formula is made by preparing formula in the *usual fashion* and adding an *equal volume* of Pedialyte® to it.) Advance to full strength formula after 24 hours. Breast milk needs no dilution. For older children, add dairy products slowly after 24 hours, and gradually advance to a normal eating pattern. It may take several days before your child's appetite returns to normal.

With repeated vomiting, *DO NOT*:

- Give plain water—water does not contain electrolytes that your child needs
- Give large amounts to drink---it will increase the vomiting
- Give dairy products for 24 hours
- Give *only* clear liquids for more than 2 days without talking to us
- Give medication not prescribed for your child

Contact us if:

- The vomiting is not better in 24 hours
- Your child is less than 12 months old
- Your child complains of stomach pain for more than two hours, or the pain is severe
- Your child is difficult to arouse
- Your child is on medication and is unable to take it
- Your child does not dampen a diaper or urinate in eight hours; or, your child is urinating an excessive amount even though vomiting
- Your child's lips, tongue, and the lining of the mouth are dry and dull
- Your child cries without making tears
- Your child's vomit is bloody
- You have any other concerns

If your child has a fever:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) can be given to a vomiting child in the form of a rectal suppository
- Dosing is the same as the oral dose: for young children, 80 mg for every 12 pounds of weight (see our Fever sheet)

The viruses that cause these illnesses are easily spread. The risk of spread is substantially reduced when family members practice regular hand-washing, particularly after stooling or changing a diaper.