

Diarrhoea & vomiting

A common condition

Gastroenteritis is a common condition where the stomach and bowel become inflamed. It is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection.

The two main symptoms of gastroenteritis are diarrhoea and vomiting. The vomiting will usually stop within one to three days, and the diarrhoea will usually pass within five to seven days, although it can last up to two weeks in some children. Your child may also have some additional symptoms caused by the infection, such as a high temperature (fever) and a tummy ache.

The most common cause of gastroenteritis in children is a virus called the rotavirus. This virus is passed out in the stools (faeces) of someone with the infection. It can be transferred to food, objects and surfaces if the infected person doesn't wash their hands after going to the toilet.

The infection is usually then passed to someone else when they either eat contaminated food or touch a contaminated object or surface and then touch their mouth.

Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should be kept off school until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in children get better without treatment, but if symptoms persist, consult your GP.

GP says

Most cases of gastroenteritis in children are mild and pass within five to seven days without any specific treatment. Make sure they drink plenty of fluids, get enough rest, and are careful with hand washing. If your child is eating solids, encourage them to eat as soon as their vomiting is under control. Simple foods that are high in carbohydrates - such as bread, rice or pasta - are usually recommended.

Drinking fruit juice or fizzy drinks is not recommended, as it can also make diarrhoea worse.

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My child has been sick a few times.

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Do I need to keep him off school?

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Yes for 48 hours after the symptoms are gone.