

Consult your doctor to ensure that this information is right for your child. Information below is for general information and does not constitute medical advice.

Vomiting Age 3 and Younger

Vomiting occurs when a child's stomach contents are forced up the esophagus and out of the mouth. Although nausea may accompany vomiting in adults and older children, children younger than age 3 are usually not able to tell you if they are having nausea. Most of the time vomiting is not serious. Home treatment will often ease your child's discomfort.

Vomiting in a baby should not be confused with spitting up. Vomiting is forceful and repeated. Spitting up may seem forceful but usually occurs shortly after feeding, is effortless, and causes no discomfort.

Causes of vomiting

A baby may spit up for no reason at all. Overfeeding, not burping your baby after feeding, intolerance to milk or formula, or exposure to tobacco smoke are other reasons why your baby may spit up.

Most vomiting in children age 3 and younger is caused by a viral stomach flu. A child with stomach flu also may have other symptoms, such as diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps. With home treatment, the vomiting usually will stop within 12 hours. Diarrhea may last for a few days or more.

Vomiting can also be caused by an infection in another part of the body, such as strep throat, pneumonia, and urinary tract infections. In rare instances, vomiting can be a symptom of a serious condition, such as a blockage of the digestive tract (pyloric stenosis) or Reye's syndrome.

When a toddler vomits, it is important to make sure he or she has not swallowed medicines, household liquids, or other poisons. Look around the house for empty containers and spills. There may be pills in your child's vomit or the vomit may have an unusual appearance, color, or odor.

A child who falls down and forcefully hits his or her head or abdomen may vomit because of an injury to those areas. Check your child's body for bruises and other injuries.

Treatment

Babies and children younger than one year old need special attention if they continue to vomit. They can quickly become dehydrated. It is important to replace lost fluids when your child is vomiting. Watch your child carefully and pay close attention to the amount of fluid he or she is able to drink.

Look for these early symptoms of dehydration:

- * Less frequent and more concentrated urine or fewer diaper changes needed. Your child's urine will have a stronger odor or darker yellow color.
- * Fussiness
- * Acting hungry most of the time

Also, be sure to notice the color of the vomit and count the number of times your child vomits. If your child vomits so frequently that you cannot get him or her to drink or vomits every time he or she takes a drink, the risk of dehydration is greater.