



VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS

What is viral gastroenteritis?

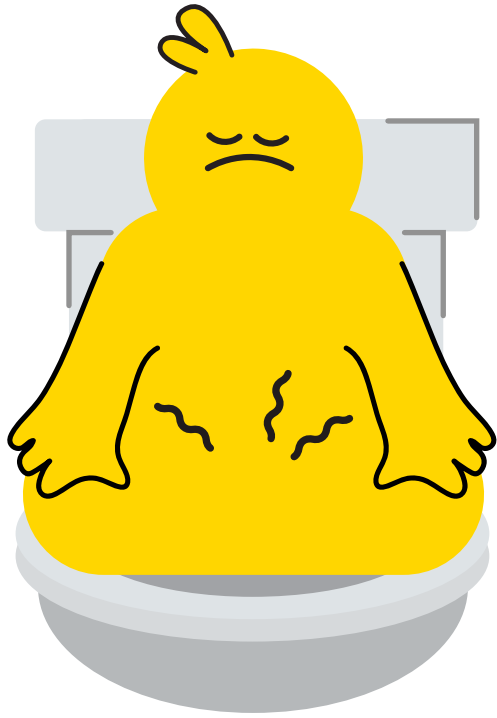
Gastroenteritis is a viral infection of the stomach and intestines which commonly occurs in childhood. It can present with a combination of the following: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain. It can last between 5-7 days.



How to manage vomiting in my child?

Most children may not require medications for vomiting. Vomiting occurs as the stomach is inflamed and irritable from the virus till it clears. The following measures are helpful:

- Offer small and frequent fluids at 60-80ml hourly.
- Stick to clear fluids if there is vomiting.
- Clear fluids = fluids which you can see through in a glass.
- Alternate between plain water, hydralyte (hydration salts), clear soups, or diluted apple juice or Ribena in older children. These fluids contain glucose and electrolytes.
- Offer only half volumes of milk for the first 2-3 days of gastroenteritis. A full milk quantity usually triggers vomiting again!
- Your child will not be able to digest solids well during this period. Offer light foods like plain porridge, bread or biscuits if they are keen. Again, avoid large full sized meal portions for the first 2-3 days of the illness.



How to manage diarrhea in my child?

- Common medications safe in children include:
 - Oral probiotics (good bacteria for the gut which help reduce the overall duration of the illness by 1-2 days)
 - Hidrasec (helps reduce water excretion in the intestines) above the age of 3 months.
 - Smecta can be used above the age of 2 because of its thick consistency which can present as a choking hazard.
- Stronger anti motility agents used in adults are not safe for young children.
- Rehydrate with 1 sachet of hydralye (hydration salt) for every large episode of diarrhea.
- Starchy food such as banana, rice, potatoes or bread are helpful if tolerated.
- If diarrhea is not improving in 5-7 days, switch to a strict non-dairy diet (no milk, cheese and yoghurt) for 1-2 weeks. This is because it is common for children to develop a temporary secondary lactose-intolerance phase after prolonged diarrhea. If your child is on formula or cow's milk switch to a lactose-free or soy option.



How to manage a diaper rash in my child?

- Apply thick layers of a zinc oxide based diaper rash cream every diaper change. Consider Desitin extra strength diaper rash cream for bad diaper rashes.
- Wash with water instead of using wet wipes.
- Air dry the bottom for 10-15 min 2-3 times a day. Consider lining the cot bed with waterproof sheets and go diaper free during naptimes and sleep for short intervals.

When to seek medical attention:

- Persistent vomiting with inability to keep down any clear fluids
- Signs of dehydration such as no urine output for 6-8 hours, dry lips or tongue, sunken eyes and increasing lethargy
- Severe or intensely prolonged and continuous abdominal pain
- Severe headaches or increased drowsiness
- Green vomitus

Present to the Children's Emergencies at KKH or NUH immediately via ambulance specifically for the following symptoms:

- Severely lethargic or drowsy child

