



Gastroenteritis (vomiting and diarrhoea)

You came to the emergency department with vomiting, diarrhoea, or both. The doctor thinks this is gastroenteritis, a common tummy infection, and that you are well enough to recover at home.

What is it?

Gastroenteritis is an infection of the stomach and bowel, usually caused by a virus, and sometimes by food that has gone bad. It causes vomiting, watery diarrhoea, tummy cramps and sometimes fever. It usually gets better by itself within a few days. The main danger is losing too much fluid (dehydration).

Looking after yourself at home

- Drink small sips often, such as a few mouthfuls every 5 to 10 minutes, even if you are vomiting.
- Oral rehydration drinks from the pharmacy replace lost water and salts best. Water is also fine.
- Avoid fizzy drinks, energy drinks, undiluted juice and alcohol, as they can make diarrhoea worse.
- Eat normal, simple food again when you feel hungry. You do not need a special diet.
- Wash your hands well with soap after the toilet and before eating to protect your family.
- Do not prepare food for others until 48 hours after the vomiting and diarrhoea stop.

Medicines

- If you were given medicine for vomiting, take it as the packet or your doctor instructs.
- Do not take medicines to stop diarrhoea if there is blood in it or you have a fever, unless your doctor advised it.
- Paracetamol can help fever and aches, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid ibuprofen while you are dehydrated.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if the vomiting lasts more than 2 days.
- See your family doctor if the diarrhoea lasts more than a week, or you have recently travelled abroad.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Vomiting blood, or material that looks like coffee grounds
- Unable to keep any fluids down for more than a day
- Signs of dehydration — no urine, dizziness, very dry mouth
- Severe abdominal pain or a high fever with the vomiting
- Blood in your diarrhoea, or black stools
- Very drowsy, confused, or hard to wake



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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