



Source CIUSSS MCQ

# Gastroenteritis in children aged 0 to 17

Gastroenteritis (commonly called *gastro*) is an inflammation of the digestive system, often caused by a viral infection. Its main complication is dehydration, which can occur rapidly, especially in children under 2 years old.

Your child may experience mainly vomiting and/or loose and more frequent stools (diarrhea). These symptoms may be accompanied by fever or abdominal pain. This contagious disease usually lasts less than a week. However, it may take up to 7-10 days for the stool to become completely normal.

Gastroenteritis is contagious. It is important to wash your hands and your child's hands frequently. Clean common surfaces (toilet, sink, work surfaces, changing tables, etc.) as often as possible with a disinfectant.

The main treatment is to maintain adequate hydration. The child's general condition is more important than the frequency of vomiting or diarrhea.

## Signs of dehydration to watch for:

- Dry mouth;
- Absence of tears;
- Increased thirst;
- Decreased frequency of urination (less than 3 to 4 urine per 24-hour period);
- Drowsiness or irritability.

## Encourage hydration

### Despite vomiting and diarrhea:

Regularly encourage the child to drink, small amounts at a time, according to the following 3 points:

- **If you're breastfeeding your child:**  
Offer your baby the breast more often to make sure he or she is well hydrated.

- **If your child is formula-fed:**  
Prepare the milk according to the manufacturer's instructions, i.e., the same concentration, and encourage him or her to drink more often to ensure adequate hydration.
- **If your child has begun eating solid food, regardless of the type of milk:**  
Drinking rehydration solutions is still the preferred choice.

## Rehydration solutions to drink

### 1<sup>st</sup> choice:

#### Commercial rehydration solution:

Ready to use liquid, or powder to reconstitute. It is very important to follow the manufacturer's recommendations when diluting.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> choice:

#### Homemade recipe (for short term and emergency solution)

- 360 mL unsweetened orange juice, without pulp. Frozen juice: reconstitute the juice with water that has boiled for 5 minutes;
- 600 mL of water (boil for 5 minutes and cool well before giving to the child)
- 2.5 mL (½ tsp.) table salt.

Use only the amounts listed above to avoid worsening your child's condition.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> choice:

**Dilute orange juice** with the equivalent amount of water that was boiled for 5 minutes (cool the water well before using). Make a mixture of half orange juice and half water. Only unsweetened orange juice without pulp should be used.

Offer 5 to 15 mL every 5 to 15 minutes, depending on your child's tolerance. Slowly and gradually increase the quantities according to the child's

tolerance, thirst and amount of diarrhea or vomiting.

### Recommended amounts by age

Age	Recommended quantity
0 to 6 months	30 mL to 90 mL per hour (1 to 3 ounces)
6 months to 2 years	90 mL to 125 mL per hour (3 to 4 ounces)
More than 2 years	125 mL to 250 mL per hour (4 to 8 ounces)

For a precise quantity based on your child's age and weight, we recommend that you talk to your pharmacist or contact Info-Santé at 811.

### Resuming feeding

1. If your child continues to vomit, allow a 30- to 60-minute break from liquids and solid foods.
2. Resume hydration gradually, by 5 to 15 mL, every 5 to 15 minutes, as tolerated.
3. After 4 hours of well-tolerated rehydration, resume regular feeding of your child, gradually, in small amounts at a time.

It is not recommended to give only rehydration solution for more than 24 hours.

- Your child's prompt return to regular feeding (breast milk, commercial infant formula, solid foods) reduces the duration of symptoms and maintains nutritional status.
- Encourage a varied diet such as cereals, bread, pasta, rice, fruits, vegetables, meat and dairy products. A restrictive diet (banana, applesauce, rice and toast) does not help reduce diarrhea or vomiting.
- In addition, this type of diet has fewer calories and fewer nutrients, which can slow down recovery. Avoid raw, spicy or sweet foods, as well as fruit juices and soft drinks.

### Please note

- Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever and pain.
- You can give acetaminophen to your child if he or she is older than 3 months. Follow the dosage, amount and dosing interval

recommended on the product label, based on your child's weight.

- If you are unsure, consult your pharmacist or dial 811 for Info-Santé.
- Avoid giving ibuprofen if your child is unable to stay hydrated.
- If your child is nauseated or vomiting, use acetaminophen suppositories.

**When to consult?** (At any time, you may refer to the [Decision support tool](#).)

### Signs of severe dehydration:

- Less than 3 to 4 urine per 24-hour period.
- Darkened eyes and no tears.
- Dry and sticky mouth and tongue.
- Your child's refuses to hydrate.
- Abdominal pain that persists or worsens.
- Diarrhea that lasts more than 7 days.
- Fever that lasts more than 24 to 48 hours.

### When to go to the ER URGENTLY?

- Black or bloody stools.
- Diarrhea with strong abdominal pain.
- Diarrhea, severe thirst, and no urine for more than 12 hours.
- Frequent vomiting that continues for more than 4-6 hours despite administration of small amounts of oral rehydration solution.
- Vomiting containing blood or stool.
- Worsening of the general condition (weakness, drowsiness, irritability, confusion).

## For more information



- [Explanatory sheets and videos: ciusssmcq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/](https://ciusssmcq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/)
- [Decision support: Gastroenteritis](#)
- [INSPQ : Diarrhea and vomiting \(gastroenteritis\)](#)
- [Gastroenteritis: sheet from the Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine](#)

## Contact information for medical clinics

- [CIUSSS MCQ website: facility Contact Information](#)

## Where to consult

- Your pharmacist
- Info-Santé 811 available at all times: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Your family doctor at your FMG or medical clinic
- If you do not have a physician: 1-844-313-2029, option 1. From 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays
- Walk-in clinics
- Your nearest emergency room (See above *information When to go to the ER URGENTLY?*)