

Christchurch Hospital

What is it?

Gastroenteritis is an infection of the stomach and bowel. When people say they have a “tummy bug” they usually mean gastroenteritis. Most of the time a virus causes it (rotavirus is the most common), but bacteria can also cause it. The infection causes runny or watery bowel motions (diarrhoea) and sometimes vomiting. It is very easy to spread.

How do I stop it spreading?

It is spread by touch (bottom to hand to mouth), so careful hand washing is the best way to prevent it. Wash your child’s hands after toileting and before eating. Wash your own hands after:

- Cleaning up vomit.
- Changing your child’s nappy.
- Helping your child go to the toilet.
- Before preparing meals.
- Before eating.

Do not share food and drinks. Keep your child away from friends and other children until vomiting and diarrhoea have stopped. Children with diarrhoea should stay away from day-care, kindergarten and school.

How is it treated?

The main treatment is to make sure your child drinks plenty of fluids. Sometimes diarrhoea can continue for up to 10 days. This is not a problem as long as your child is drinking. Do not give medicines to stop vomiting and diarrhoea. They do not work and may be harmful.

Caring for your child

- Encourage fluids.
- You can continue to breast or bottle feed but feed smaller amounts more often.
- For all other children, offer clear fluid even if they are vomiting.

Clear fluid is any fluid through which you can read newsprint

- Give small amounts frequently (e.g. one teaspoonful every five minutes).
- As the vomits become further apart, you can give more fluid less frequently.

Fluids that are suitable are:

- Water
- Diluted fruit juice/cordial/lemonade (1 cup juice and 5 cups water).
- Rehydration solutions (e.g. Gastrolyte) from your chemist or doctor
- Do not use sports drinks – they contain too much sugar and can make diarrhoea worse.
- Once the vomiting has stopped, children can eat and drink what they want.
- Your child will need more rest, so encourage this.
- Bottoms can become very red and sore. Use a protective cream such as zinc and castor oil and change nappies frequently.



Seek Medical help if your child:

- Is vomiting frequently and unable to keep any fluids down.
- Is not drinking, is vomiting and still has diarrhoea.
- Has blood in the bowel motions.
- Develops tummy pain.
- Does not improve over the next few days.
- Becomes sleepy or lethargic/listless.
- Or if you are concerned about them for any reason.

Information on your child's admission will be sent to your GP.

Have you changed GP's? Do we have your current GP recorded correctly?

If you do not have a regular GP, please talk to your nurse who can give you a list of GP's in your area.

If you have been discharged from the Children's Acute Assessment Unit, the staff will phone you the next day to check on your child's progress and answer any questions you may have.

If you are concerned over the next 24 hours, please contact us on 364 0428.

Continue to contact your GP for ongoing care of your child.

Children's health information website: www.kidshealth.org.nz

Christchurch Hospital website: www.cdhb.govt.nz

