

Vomiting or Diarrhea

Vomiting

There are many reasons why a person throws up or vomits. The most common reason is from a stomach virus (which is often called the 'stomach flu' by mistake – the real flu usually does not cause vomiting).

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

- + **Rest.** If you do not rest and limit your activity, you can feel sick and throw up more.
- + **Stay hydrated.** This means you need to drink liquids such as water, flat ginger ale (without the fizz), broth, clear juices, and weak tea.
- + Take small sips often. **DO NOT** drink a whole glass at once.
- + Try drinking liquids that are at room temperature or warm. This can help settle your stomach.
- + **After the vomiting has stopped,** eat small amounts of plain, bland foods for the first 12 hours. Start with foods that are easy to digest such as soda crackers, plain toast, and gelatine desserts (such as Jell-O). If you feel okay eating these foods, try eating cereal, plain rice, noodles, soup, and eggs. The BRAT diet may also help: bananas, rice, apple sauce and tea/toast. Current evidence has found no harm from introducing a normal diet including dairy products less than 12 hours after being rehydrated.
- + **DO NOT** eat fatty or spicy foods.

- + **Take medicines as directed by the doctor.**

Some medicines for vomiting can make you very sleepy.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea usually lasts for a couple of days but can last for longer. It depends on what caused the diarrhea. When you have diarrhea, you lose a large amount of water and salts. If not treated properly, you can become very dehydrated.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

Follow the instructions for vomiting as well as what is listed here.

- + **Rest.**
- + **Stay hydrated.**
- + **Eat small amounts of plain, bland foods for the next 12 hours.** Start with foods that are easy to digest (see under Vomiting). Some foods and drinks can worsen your diarrhea.

For a few days:

- + Avoid eating dairy products (such as milk, cheese, and yogurt).
- + Avoid eating foods high in fibre (such as whole grains, fruits with skins, raw vegetables).
- + Avoid eating fatty or spicy foods.
- + Avoid drinking coffee, colas, or alcohol.
- + **Stop the spread of germs.** Wash your hands often. Always wash your hands for at least 45 seconds after using the toilet.
- + **DO NOT** let others use your towel.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Go to the nearest Emergency Department or see your family doctor if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + You have vomited for longer than 24 hours.
- + Your vomit has blood in it or looks like coffee grounds.
- + You have very bad belly (abdominal) pain or rectal pain that does not go away.
- + You have a bad headache and stiff neck, especially if you have never had a headache like it before.
- + You have a signs of dehydration:
 - + Dry mouth.
 - + Very dark amber urine (pee).
 - + Very little or no urine.
 - + Feeling very dizzy or lightheaded.
 - + Blacking out or passing out.
- + You have a fever over 38.5 C (101.3 F).
- + Your diarrhea lasts longer than 3 days.
- + Your bowel movements have blood in them or they become black and look like tar.

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in ___ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:

www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/vomiting-or-diarrhea/

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca