

Gastroenteritis in Children — Essential Information for Parents

What is it?

Acute gastroenteritis is characterized by very soft or liquid stools, often more than three times per day. It usually lasts less than a week. Vomiting and fever are common. The main risk is dehydration, especially in younger children.

Treatment: rehydration above all

Oral rehydration solutions (ORS) such as Adiaril® are specifically adapted to children's needs.

- **Preparation:** 1 sachet for 200 mL of water (not in milk!). Keep refrigerated and use within 24 hours. Do not add anything (no syrup, no sugar). Never try to prepare a homemade rehydration solution: incorrect dosing can be dangerous for the child.
- **If vomiting occurs:** start with very small amounts (10–15 mL every 5 minutes), then gradually increase depending on tolerance.
- Offer regularly, and after each liquid stool or vomiting episode. There is no maximum quantity. Never force the child if they refuse.

For older children who refuse ORS: offer water or diluted apple juice, in small repeated amounts, in addition to varied food.

At any age, keep the usual milk.

Feeding during the illness

- **Breastfed infants:** breastfeeding continues normally, in addition to ORS if needed.
- **Infants on formula:** keep the usual formula, regardless of age. Give smaller feeds more often. Lactose-free formulas are no longer recommended.
- **Children eating solid foods:** resume the usual diet, which is generally better tolerated than restrictive diets. No anti-diarrheal diet has proven effective. Avoid foods very high in fiber (legumes, whole grains, dried fruits...).

Home monitoring

Keep track of: what the child drinks, the number of liquid stools, vomiting episodes, and temperature. Consult a doctor if:

- vomiting persists or the child refuses to drink, creating an imbalance between losses (diarrhea, vomiting) and intake (milk, ORS);
- the child becomes apathetic, limp, unusually irritable, or pale;
- breathing becomes rapid;
- the child sleeps a lot and is difficult to wake.

Preventing contagion

- frequent handwashing, especially after each diaper change;
- cleaning toilets, door handles, surfaces, and objects handled by the child.

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