

How do I prevent the spread of infection to others?

Gastroenteritis can very easily be passed on from person to person. Therefore, you and your child need to take measures to try to reduce this chance.

- Wash hands regularly with liquid soap before preparing food and after going to the toilet.
- Regularly clean the toilets used including the potty.
- Stay off school/nursery until at least 48 hours after last episode of diarrhoea/vomiting.
- No swimming for 2 weeks after last episode of diarrhoea.

Reference source

- NICE guidelines
- www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg84

Contact details

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(Senior Sister Kirsty Ellis)

Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) NHS Foundation Trust fully subscribes to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) *Being Open* best practice framework, November 2010.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located in far left corner as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–4.00pm
Monday to Friday

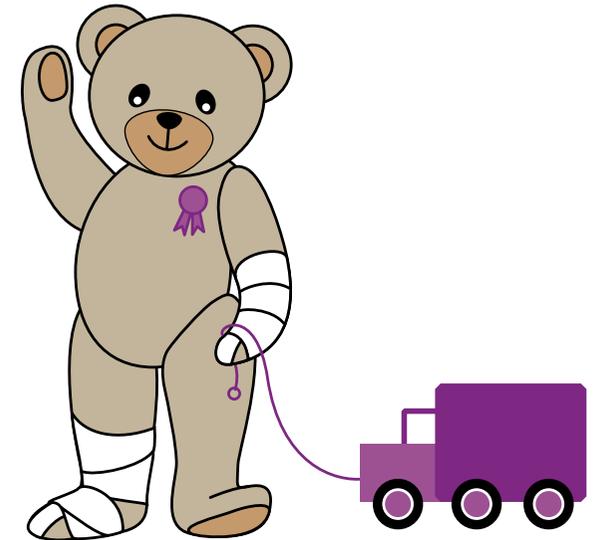
If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Patient information leaflet

Gastroenteritis



Paediatrics A&E Department

What is Gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is a common infection of the gut (intestines). Many children have more than one episode in a year.

The severity can be a mild tummy upset for 1-2 days with some mild diarrhoea. Severe diarrhoea and vomiting can last for 5-7 days.

What causes it?

A virus called Rotavirus is the most common cause of gastroenteritis. Almost every child by 5 years old will have had the infection in the UK.

Sometimes gastroenteritis can be caused by "Food poisoning" (eating food with bacteria in).

What are the symptoms and signs of Gastroenteritis?

- Diarrhoea – loose stools at least 3 times a day for 5-7 days.
- Stomach pain
- Vomiting – 1-2 days

What are the symptoms and signs of dehydration?

Dehydration is a lack of fluid in the body. Dehydration can be caused by diarrhoea and vomiting.

Symptoms in children include:

- Passing little urine
- Dry mouth
- Dry tongue and lips

- Sunken eyes
- Weakness
- Irritable or lethargic.

Severe dehydration is a **medical emergency** and **immediate medical attention** is needed if:

- Drowsiness
- Pale or mottled skin
- Cold hands or feet
- Very few wet nappies
- Fast (but often shallow) breathing.

When do I seek medical help?

Most children with gastroenteritis have mild symptoms that get better in a few days. The important thing is to ensure that they have plenty to drink. In many cases, you do not need to seek medical advice. However, you should seek medical advice in the following situations. Or if there are any other symptoms that you are concerned about):

- If your child is under the age of six months.
- If your child has an underlying medical condition e.g. premature.
- If your child has a fever (high temperature).
- If your child appears drowsy or confused.
- If your child is vomiting and unable to keep fluids down.
- If there is blood in their diarrhoea or vomit.
- If your child has severe abdominal pain.
- Infections caught abroad.

- If your child has severe symptoms or their condition is getting worse.
- If your child's symptoms are not settling (for example, vomiting for more than 1-2 days, or diarrhoea that does not start to settle after 3-4 days).

What is the treatment of gastroenteritis in children?

1. Encourage to drink plenty of fluids. Little and often fluid replaces the fluid loss in diarrhoea and vomit.

Oral rehydration sachets may be advised – these provide salt and sugar to help rehydrate.
2. Continue a normal varied diet – this includes breast milk and formula milk feeds.
3. AVOID: Fizzy drinks and fruit juices.
4. If your child vomits, wait 5-10 minutes. Then start giving drinks again, but more slowly (for example, a spoonful every 2-3 minutes). Using a syringe can help in younger children who are not able to take sips.

NB: If your child is dehydrated, or is becoming dehydrated, you should seek medical advice urgently.