

Nausea, Vomiting, and Diarrhea

Vomiting and diarrhea, although bothersome, are usually self-limited - that is, they tend to go away in one to three days.

Following the guidelines below with a gradual progression to a normal diet will help shorten the duration of these symptoms.

Causes

Most vomiting accompanied by diarrhea is caused by viruses which have been eaten. Fever may indicate infection from bacteria in food or water. "Food poisoning" usually affects several people who have eaten the same food. If this is suspected, you should ask your health care provider to contact the local health department.

Some causes of nausea and vomiting are:

- stomach inflammation (gastritis)
- peptic ulcer, intestinal obstruction
- high fever, usually with infections
- inner ear infection (labyrinthitis)
- migraine headache, head injury
- pregnancy
- some medications
- psychological reasons, such as an emotional shock or a nauseating sight or smell
- serious metabolic disorders, such as kidney failure, shock, and the onset of diabetic coma
- overeating, excessive drinking of alcohol
- swallowing an irritating substance; poisoning
- travel sickness
- allergic reactions

Dangers of dehydration

Prolonged and continual vomiting is a serious symptom because it may lead to excess fluid loss or dehydration; it may also be an indication of a severe underlying disorder.

Dehydration is indicated by

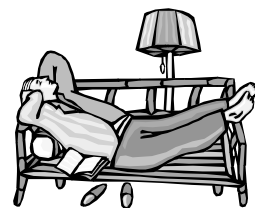
- a dry tongue
- sunken eyeballs
- skin that doesn't bounce back quickly when pinched up



- concentrated, darker urine, a decrease in urine output, and eventually lack of urination. Without enough water in circulation, the kidneys can stop working, causing dangerous waste products to build up and serious damage to kidneys and other organs.
- other signs of dehydration are a rapid pulse rate, constant thirst, and drowsiness or even unconsciousness.

Treatment for Vomiting

Lie down in a quiet room with a basin at the bedside. Do not attempt to suppress vomiting. Do not take any food or medicines. Avoid all dairy products, acidic fruits and juices, alcohol, coffee (including decaffeinated), sodas except flat (decarbonated) non-caffeinated clear sodas (7-Up or ginger ale). Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen and medications containing these.



Immediately after vomiting or retching (dry heaves), allow the stomach to remain empty for 2 hours. Eat ice chips, several ounces over the next 90 minutes. If no vomiting occurs, try sips of clear liquids, such as water, broth, or diluted apple juice. If these sips are tolerated without vomiting, slowly increase the volume of these fluids. If vomiting recurs, allow the stomach to rest and start over with ice chips.

First 12-18 hours: take clear liquids

- ice chips
- water
- diluted apple juice
- flat, non-caffeinated clear sodas
- Jello/gelatin
- Popsicles
- weak non-caffeinated herbal teas

Once fluids are kept down consistently, foods may be slowly added. In the next 12 hours, try small amounts of:

- banana
- toast/jelly (no butter or margarine)
- clear soup
- saltine or graham crackers
- pretzels
- applesauce
- white rice



- steamed or mashed potatoes
- dry cereal without milk

After 24 hours, add:

- cooked oatmeal or Cream of Wheat without milk
- hard-boiled or poached egg (white only)
- cooked white chicken (not fried, remove skin)
- lean beef

During the next 2 or 3 days gradually add more foods, such as skim milk, low-fat yogurt, puddings, fruit.

Do not rush back to a full regular diet - continue to avoid fatty/greasy foods, spicy foods, acidic foods, and alcohol.

If vomiting ceases with these simple measures and if there are no other symptoms, it may not be necessary to call a physician. If vomiting continues, however, medical care should be sought as soon as possible.

Limit intake of sweets and avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol.

After stools begin to form, gradually add other foods to the diet. Low fat dairy foods may be tried after bowel movements have been normal for 3 days. Start with yogurt, buttermilk, custards, or cottage cheese, which are better tolerated than milk and harder cheeses.

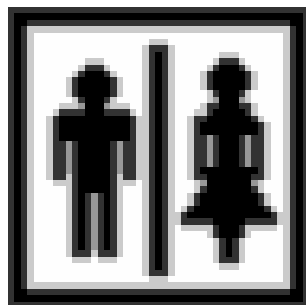
See a Health Care Provider if you have

- Diarrhea lasting more than 4 days
- Fever over 101° taken orally
- Pain developing in the abdomen or rectum
- Vomiting which prevents the intake of fluids for 24 hours
- Yellowing of eyes and skin (jaundice)

Causes of diarrhea

Attacks of mild acute diarrhea can often be traced to a simple dietary cause, such as eating rich food, or to an emotional upset. But serious acute diarrhea may be caused by viral or bacterial infection including food poisoning, by chemical poisoning, and by certain respiratory infections.

Persons with serious acute diarrhea usually need immediate medical help because of the high risk of dehydration. See other side for signs of dehydration.



Treatment for diarrhea

All persons with acute diarrhea should drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Include all foods listed above but take feedings less often to reduce the intestinal stimulation reflex that causes a bowel movement. Bananas and rice may help slow the bowel.

Antidiarrheal or antispasmodic preparations may be prescribed to help ease the symptoms. If over-the-counter antidiarrheal medications are used, be sure to follow the instructions.

