

Tummy Troubles

Vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, stomach pain – almost all children have one or another from time to time. Occasional tummy troubles are rarely serious and often can be handled at home with rest and changes in diet.



Fever plus vomiting and diarrhea often signals the stomach bug. **Food poisoning** can also cause these symptoms. The biggest threat from these illnesses is **dehydration** (excessive loss of fluids). The younger the child, the greater the risk.

Dehydration can include one or more of these signs:

- Sunken eyes.
- In babies, sunken soft spot (fontanel on top of the head).
- Dry or sticky mouth.
- Decreased urination (in babies, less than three to four wet diapers a day; in older children, longer than 12 hours without urinating).
- Increased sleepiness or sluggish inactivity.
- Increased fussiness or irritability.
- No tears when crying.

Diet for a Tummy Bug

While your child is still sick, give small, frequent sips of clear fluids (water, non-sweetened juice). For children younger than 2 years, doctors often prefer a special fluid-replacement drink, such as Pedialyte. For older children, try Gatorade, grape juice, water, ice pops, or flat ginger ale. Do not give red-colored drinks as they can be confused with blood when vomiting.



After the vomiting subsides, offer the “BRAT” diet – bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast. Start slowly with small servings. If your child is younger than 12 months, your pediatrician may give you special feeding instructions to reduce the risk of dehydration.

Call your pediatrician immediately if your child:

- is less than 6 months old and develops persistent diarrhea and/or vomiting.
- is less than 12 months old and shows signs of stomach pain, such as prolonged crying and pulling their legs toward their belly.
- has a stomachache for more than three hours, especially if the pain is located in the lower right side of their belly, which could be a sign of appendicitis.
- has a stomachache along with swelling in the groin area or testicles.
- vomits greenish stomach contents or has blood in their vomit or stool.
- shows signs of dehydration (see other side).

Other Kinds of Tummyaches

Overeating, indigestion, constipation, or stress can also cause a stomachache with no fever, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Constipation means infrequent or painful bowel movements (less than one every three or four days). Diet changes often relieve constipation. Never give a child over-the-counter laxatives, suppositories, or enemas without specific instructions from your pediatrician.

Stress can cause stomachaches that tend to recur and may happen prior to worrisome events, such as tests at school. Symptoms usually go away with rest, but you should still discuss them with your pediatrician.

If your child shows signs of dehydration, call your pediatrician immediately.

For more information on health-related topics, visit our health library at CHKD.org/HealthLibrary.

Your child’s pediatrician should be your primary source of advice about your child’s health.

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