

Dr Glasser's Stomach Flu Handout

Most vomiting and diarrhea illnesses in children are caused by a virus. There are numerous viruses that come into the community and cause outbreaks of "Stomach Flu" among both kids and adults. The illness is usually less severe the older the person is because they have built up immunity over time. Usually, the vomiting starts first and then the diarrhea but they may occur together or just one or the other. There may or may not be fever with it, but the fever will usually resolve within 24-96 hrs (1-4 days). Generally with viral stomach flu, the diarrhea is watery and doesn't usually have blood or mucus in it. Bloody, mucousy diarrhea with high fevers (over 102.5) is usually more likely to be associated with a bacteria infection and the child should be brought in for evaluation with a stool sample in the diaper if possible.

Most of the time with virus stomach flu, the vomiting is limited to 1-2 days and the diarrhea resolves within 10 days. Longer than that, the child needs to be seen. The most common complication of virus stomach flu is dehydration. The child will tend to have no tears when crying, have sticky, tacky saliva in the mouth, or no saliva at all, and will have less urine produced than normal by a significant amount. The child may also act excessively sleepy or lethargic and be uninterested in drinking fluids at all. If you think your child is dehydrated, go to the ER immediately (St Rose, Sunrise, Summerlin, or UMC which have dedicated pediatric ERs 24/7).

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When the child is vomiting, give small volumes of pedialyte as follows: 1/2 oz wait 15-30 min if no vomiting increase by 1/2 oz every 15-30 min until tolerating 4-5 oz at a time with no vomiting. Then you may allow the child to drink as much of it as he wants. You may substitute Gatorade for the child over 2 yrs old. No formula or solid foods should be given until there has been no vomiting for at least 12 hours but preferably 24 hours. Start with the BRAT diet: bananas, rice, applesauce, toast/crackers and clear chicken broth is also good. Realize that vomiting may reoccur if you push too hard with milk or solids. You may restart milk if there has been no vomiting for at least 24 hrs AND the child is having less than 4 watery stools in 24 hrs. Consider switching to lactose free formula or lactaid milk for about 1 week if there was a lot of diarrhea since the child may have a temporary lactose intolerance as a result of the virus infection. AVOID JUICE as it may make the diarrhea worse. There are no antibiotics to treat this infection because it is a virus. The illness has to run its course. If your child has diarrhea for longer than 10 days, an evaluation is necessary in the office with fresh stool samples brought in the diaper if possible.

Call 248-7337 for appointments

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