Vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration

Practical care for adults and children

Replace lost fluid. Babies, young children, older adults and people with chronic illness can become dehydrated more quickly.

Adults and older children

- Take frequent small sips if you feel sick. A pharmacist can recommend oral rehydration solution; mix it exactly as the packet says. Eat when you feel able.
- If you have kidney or heart disease, diabetes or a fluid restriction, ask for an individual fluid and medicine plan.

Babies and younger children

- Continue breastfeeding or normal-strength formula, offering smaller feeds more often if needed. Do not dilute formula.
- Ask about age-appropriate oral rehydration solution. Avoid fruit juice and fizzy drinks for diarrhoea. Do not give children under 12 medicines to stop diarrhoea.
- Fewer wet nappies, few tears, sunken eyes or unusual drowsiness need prompt assessment. Seek advice if a baby stops feeding or you are worried about a baby under 12 months.

When to get medical help

- Seek urgent advice if fluid will not stay down, urine becomes very scanty, dizziness persists on standing, there is bloody diarrhoea or the person is getting worse.
- Get advice if vomiting lasts more than 2 days or diarrhoea more than 7 days. Do not wait that long when warning signs are present.

Emergency assessment

Blood or coffee-ground vomit, green vomit, sudden severe abdominal pain, confusion or difficulty waking need emergency assessment. Call 112 for collapse, severe breathing difficulty or an unresponsive person.

Recovery and preventing spread

Vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration

Wash hands with soap and water and clean contaminated surfaces. Do not share towels or prepare food for others while ill.

Stay away from work or school for at least 48 hours after the last vomiting or diarrhoea. Healthcare and food-handling work may need additional occupational advice.

Symptoms started

Fluids / rehydration advice

Urine or wet nappies - changes noticed

Medicine advice from clinician

Review date / contact plan

Questions or notes for my appointment

Sources and further reading

NHS: diarrhoea and vomiting
https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/diarrhoea-and-vomiting/

NHS: dehydration
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dehydration/

General information. Follow your individual clinical plan. Sources checked 31 October 2026; review due October 2027.