



## TINY TUMMIES IN TROUBLE: YOUR SICK SENSE TO GASTROENTERITIS

# WHAT IS GASTROENTERITIS

Gastroenteritis, commonly known as gastro, is an infection of the intestines that causes symptoms such as watery diarrhea, vomiting, or both. This illness is highly contagious and often spreads in environments like schools, daycares, and families. While vomiting usually subsides within a few days, diarrhea can persist for up to 10 days. Various pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, and parasites, can trigger gastroenteritis.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Common signs and symptoms include:

- Vomiting: Lasting 2-3 days
- Diarrhea: Lasting up to 10 days
- Fever
- Stomach pain
- Signs of dehydration

### DEHYDRATION RISK

Young children, especially those under 6 months, are particularly susceptible to dehydration. Signs of dehydration in your child may include:

- Fewer than half the usual number of wet diapers daily or dry diapers
- Cool, mottled, or greyish skin, along with drowsiness
- Dark-colored urine and infrequent bathroom visits
- Light-headedness, dizziness, dry lips, or dry mouth

## CARING FOR YOUR CHILD AT HOME

### **Preventing Dehydration:**

The primary treatment for gastroenteritis focuses on preventing dehydration by replenishing lost fluids. Encourage your child to take small sips of fluids to minimize the likelihood of vomiting. A hydration check in chart is a simple useful tool to help track fluids.

Suitable fluids include:

- Diluted sugar-based drinks (e.g., apple juice mixed 50:50 with water)
- Oral rehydration solutions (e.g., Gluco-lyte, Gastrolyte, Hydralyte, Repalyte, Pedialyte) – ensure to follow dosage instructions carefully.

Avoid giving large amounts of plain water, as it lacks the essential sugars and salts your child needs.

### **Reintroducing Food:**

For older children, you can start reintroducing solid foods within 24 hours of symptom onset. Begin with bland options such as:

- Plain pasta
- Boiled rice
- Dry toast
- Plain biscuits

For babies under 12 months, resume their regular milk formula after 24 hours, without dilution.

## REDUCING THE SPREAD OF GASTROENTE RITIS

### **Infection Control:**

To minimize the spread of gastroenteritis, follow these guidelines:

- Keep your child away from other children for 48 hours after their last episode of diarrhea.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before meals and after changing diapers; alcohol sanitizers are ineffective against this infection.
- Change diapers frequently and apply a zinc-based cream to prevent diaper rash caused by diarrhea.

## WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP

Monitor your child's symptoms closely and seek medical attention if:

- Symptoms worsen after a doctor visit.
- Diarrhea persists for more than 10 days.
- **Emergency Situations:**

Take your child to the nearest emergency department if they experience any of the following:

- Are under 3 months old, vomit (with or without diarrhea), and have a fever.
- Vomit frequently and cannot keep fluids down (their output is greater than their input), especially if under 6 months.
- Have more than 8 watery stools per day.
- Show fewer than half their usual number of wet nappies or have significantly drier nappies.
- Experience severe stomach pain.
- Have green vomit or blood in their vomit or stool.
- Your child is sicker than ever before and your gut is telling you something is not right.
- Exhibit severe neck or head pain, are excessively fussy or drowsy, or may have swallowed a button battery.

## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Gastroenteritis spreads quickly, especially among children.
- Good hand hygiene and careful monitoring can significantly reduce the risk of transmission.
- Stay vigilant for signs of dehydration and seek medical advice when necessary.
- Encourage fluid intake and a gradual return to solid foods.
- Trust your Sick Sense!

# HYDRATION CHECK IN TOOL

CHECK IN AND KEEP TRACK OF YOUR LITTLE LOVES HYDRATION WITH THE FLUIDS 'IN' VS FLUIDS 'OUT' FORMULA



**BABIES**  
Half child's weight in mls every 5 minutes. Eg. Child weighs 10kg = 5mls of oral rehydration solution

---

**BREASTFED BABIES**  
Offer small frequent feeds and write down length of breast feed

---

**INFANTS & OLDER CHILDREN**  
Small frequent amounts of fluids are gentler and easier to tolerate than larger amounts of fluids less often. Measuring cups or syringes are a great tool to measure fluids. 1x Hydralite ice block = 60mls

FLUIDS IN

TIME	FLUID	AMOUNT	WEE	VOMIT	DIARRHOEA
10AM	HYDRALITE	5ML	✓		✓

FLUIDS OUT

### DISCLAIMER

**THIS FACT SHEET PROVIDES GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY. IT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL ADVICE. ALWAYS CONSULT A DOCTOR IF CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH.**