



## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

### Vomiting Teen Version

#### What is vomiting?

Vomiting is the forceful emptying ("throwing up") of a large portion of the stomach's contents through the mouth. Strong stomach contractions against a closed stomach outlet result in vomiting.

#### What is the cause?

Most vomiting is caused by a viral infection of the lining of the stomach or by eating something that disagrees with your stomach. Usually, a person whose vomiting is caused by a virus also has diarrhea. If you have vomiting without diarrhea and it lasts more than 24 hours, you may have something more serious.

#### How long will it last?

The vomiting usually stops in 6 to 24 hours. Changes in the diet usually speed recovery.

#### How can I take care of myself?

- **Drink clear fluids in small amounts for 8 hours (do not eat any solid food)** Drink only clear fluids (not milk) in small amounts until 8 hours have passed without vomiting. Water or ice chips seem to work best. Another option is half-strength, lemon-lime soda or Popsicles. Stir the soda until no fizz remains (the bubbles inflate the stomach and increase the chances of continued vomiting). Start with 1 tablespoon of the clear fluid every 5 minutes. After 4 hours without vomiting, double the amount each hour. If you vomit using this treatment, rest your stomach completely for 1 hour and then start over. This one-swallow-at-a-time approach rarely fails.
- **Eat bland foods after 8 hours without vomiting** After 8 hours without vomiting, you can gradually return to a normal diet. Start with such foods as saltine crackers, honey on white bread, bland soups like "chicken with stars," rice, and mashed potatoes. Usually you can be back on a normal diet within 24 hours after recovery from vomiting.
- **Medicines** Do not take any medicines by mouth for 8 hours. Oral medicines can irritate the stomach and make vomiting worse. Call your healthcare provider if you need to continue taking a prescription medicine.
- **Common mistakes in the treatment of vomiting** A common error is to drink a full glass of clear fluid rather than gradually increasing the amount. This almost always leads to continued vomiting. There is no effective drug or suppository for vomiting. Diet is the best treatment. Vomiting alone rarely causes dehydration unless you take drugs by mouth, milk, or too much clear fluid.

#### When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- You have any signs of dehydration (such as no urine in over 8 hours or a very dry mouth)
- You vomit up blood or something that looks like coffee grounds.
- You get confused or are difficult to awaken.
- You have severe abdominal pain.
- You start feeling very sick.

Call during office hours if:

- The vomiting continues for more than 48 hours.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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