

Acute Gastroenteritis (Acute Diarrhea)

Gastroenteritis is the same as diarrhea and vomiting, which is caused by germs, contaminated food, or unsafe drinking water. The most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in children is viral.



Common symptoms of the disease:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Weakness
- Abdominal cramps (pain or tenderness in the abdomen when touched)
- Dehydration

Since this disease is mostly caused by viruses, antibiotics have no effect on this type of gastroenteritis. Diarrhea and vomiting in this disease cause the loss of fluids and chemicals in the body called electrolytes.

If a child loses a lot of fluids and electrolytes, they may become dehydrated, and not treating it can be very dangerous. Treatment should focus on replacing lost fluids and salts through diarrhea.

Signs of dehydration in children:

- Decreased urination
- Darkening of urine color
- Fatigue and lethargy
- Dry mouth
- Decreased tears
- Intense thirst for water

Treatment of gastroenteritis:

Mild cases do not require hospitalization and are treated at home. You should give your child oral rehydration solutions (ORS) to replace lost fluids and electrolytes. It is best to buy ORS from the pharmacy.

If your child is an infant, continue breastfeeding and if your child is eating, give them food after receiving ORS. Do not add sugar to ORS because your child may not drink it. Avoid eating too much fat and sugar.

- Usually, this disease is more severe in infants who are at greater risk of dehydration.
- If the disease is seen in infants, it is necessary to see a doctor.
- Do not give children antidiarrheal medications.

- If there is blood in the stool, high fever, severe weakness and lethargy, or severe diarrhea, see a doctor or healthcare facility immediately.

Let the child rest.

- Do not use water alone for treatment.
- Water is not well absorbed in children with gastroenteritis. Also, avoid fruit juices and cow's milk, which can make diarrhea worse.
- Do not limit your child's diet to a special diet such as bananas, rice, applesauce, and bread.
- If your child has a fever, use acetaminophen.
- If the disease is severe, consult a doctor.

When to see a doctor:

If your child does not improve within 24 hours of starting ORS, or if you have difficulty giving ORS to your child (for example, giving this solution did not have any effect on them or it was very difficult to give it to them and they could not drink it), be sure to inform your doctor. Also, if your child experiences any of these symptoms, be sure to inform your doctor:

- Half-closed eyes, less than usual tears or saliva, increased drowsiness or restlessness, fever over 38 degrees or higher in children who are three months old or younger and fever 39 degrees or higher in older children, a child younger than 6 months of age or weighing less than 8 kg has bloody diarrhea.

What to do if a child is sick:

1. Always keep the surfaces that the child is in contact with and the places that the sick child has touched clean.
2. Wash your hands and your children's hands frequently (before giving milk and starting food preparation, after eating and before and after using the toilet).
3. Use disposable diapers.
4. The child's diaper should be tightly fastened so that the stool does not spread.
5. The bed and mattress of the child when hospitalized or at home should be disinfected with disinfecting solutions to prevent the spread of infection. Infectious diarrhea can be contagious for several weeks.
6. Fever control should be done correctly.
7. Avoid eating suspicious food that is sold outside and avoid giving ready-made meals, especially sausages and salami, to your child.
8. If you suspect water contamination, boil water for 10 to 15 minutes.
9. Food should be prepared fresh and food should not be stored outside the refrigerator.