



## **Gastroenteritis (managing rehydration at home)**

### **Parent information leaflet**

Your child has been diagnosed with **Gastroenteritis** “*Gastro*”.

Gastroenteritis (“gastro”) is a very common bowel infection in children that causes vomiting and diarrhoea (runny or watery poo). The vomiting may settle quickly, but the diarrhoea can last up to 10 days. Gastro can be caused by a number of germs; the most common cause is a viral infection. Gastro is contagious and is more common in the winter/spring months. Most children do not need to take medicine. Most children with gastro can be looked after at home once they drink adequate amounts of fluids. Babies under 6 months can become quite ill if they become dehydrated, it is very important to make sure they drink enough fluids and to return for re-assessment if any concerns.

### **Symptoms of gastro may include:**

- Feeling unwell, not wanting to eat or drink (loss of appetite)
- Nausea “sick feeling”
- Usually vomiting occurs for the first couple of days then settles down, but diarrhoea may persist for a week to 10 days
- Tummy pains/cramps
- Fever

### **When your child is discharged home**

#### **DO NOT**

- Do not give medicine to stop or reduce the vomiting and/or diarrhoea, unless you have been instructed to do so by a doctor or nurse as this may be harmful.
- Do not give water alone if your child continues to vomit or have diarrhoea.
- If you are formula feeding, do not dilute the formula.

## DO

- Wash your hands well with soap and water regularly and after nappy changes or going to the toilet.
- If you are breastfeeding your baby, continue to feed your baby by giving small amounts and often. Offer your baby a feed or drink every time they vomit. If formula feeding and they don't want to drink it, offer oral rehydration solution (e.g. Dioralyte) for the first 12 hours.
- For all children, if vomiting and/or diarrhoea continue, give your child a few mouthfuls of fluid every 15 minutes. Types of fluid are oral rehydration solution or ½ strength (diluted) apple juice, do not give water alone. Write down the amount and type of fluid your child drinks. Continue this until no further vomiting and they are passing urine, increased energy, normal colour, moist lips.
- Watch your child closely if symptoms continue.
- If your child is hungry it is ok to offer them their normal foods. Give your child light diet, for example toast/cereal if they have tolerated fluids. Do not stop food for more than 24 hours. Your child may refuse to eat; this is not a problem if they are taking adequate amounts of fluids.
- Let your child return to school/crèche when bowel habits return to normal.

**Gastroenteritis is most frequently the result of a viral infection. Antibiotics do not work on viruses and are not routinely given for gastroenteritis.**

**Remember:** Gastroenteritis is infectious! Wash your hands well with soap and warm water, particularly before feeding and after changing nappies and limiting exposure to other children until diarrhoea has stopped for at least 24 hours will help to reduce the spread of infection.

### **Return to your GP or Emergency Department if your child:**

- Is not drinking
- Is having severe tummy pains
- Diarrhoea lasts for more than 10 days/if very frequent >10 episodes per day
- Appears dehydrated – not passing/decreased amounts of urine (2 or less wet nappies in 24 hours), pale, sunken eyes, dry mouth, hard to wake up/is very sleepy, no tears when crying
- Keeps vomiting
- Green/blood-stained vomit
- Blood/black colour in their poo
- If you increasingly worried for any reason