Vomiting and Diarrhea

Vomiting and diarrhea are common childhood illnesses, particularly in toddlers, which may result from intestinal viruses, other infections, or irritating food substances. More than five or six loose bowel movements per day is considered diarrhea. These intestinal symptoms usually run their course in a few days without harm to your child, although occasionally symptoms may last one to two weeks.

VOMITING

For vomiting without diarrhea, give your child nothing by mouth for two hours, and then start offering a rehydration solution, such as Pedialyte. Offer one teaspoon every 10 minutes for one hour. Wait 1/2 hour. If no vomiting recurs, offer one ounce every 1/2 hour and increase up to two ounces every 1/2 hour as tolerated by your child. If vomiting does not recur, continue for 12 hours. You may then begin other clear liquids for an additional 12 hours. After this first 24 hours of fluid, advance to a diet appropriate for age: breast milk or formula for infants; bland foods when older to include rice cereal, bananas, breads, pastas, potatoes, bland meats, soups, etc. A fully normal diet for age should be possible within a few days. If vomiting continues in spite of small amounts of rehydration solutions please seek attention.

FOR DIARRHEA

Infants who are breast fed and/or taking infant formula should continue to do so if they are alert comfortable, no vomiting, low grade or no fever, normal urinary voiding pattern and loose stools without blood, less than 10 times per day. This permits optimum nutrition to encourage healing of bowel function.

If the appetite is significantly decreased, you may supplement with rehydration solution for the first 12 hrs and then resume nursing or formula feeding.

Older infants on solid foods, toddlers and children with uncomplicated diarrhea may continue to eat a normal diet. Avoid apple, prune juice or sugary drinks as they can increase the water content of stool and produce unwanted laxative effects. Avoid any red juice for red jello so as not to confuse the stool color with blood. Your older child may have clear liquids to drink, solid, starchy foods such as cereal, crackers, bananas, applesauce are absorbed best. As the diarrhea subsides, you can continue a normal diet even if the stools are not fully formed.

When to seek help:

If your child’s appetite is reduced, if they have persistent vomiting, diarrhea or have fever, if your child is urinating less frequently, if the stools are very liquid and greatly increased in number and volume, or if your child feels very ill seek care immediately.