

Viral gastroenteritis

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What is it and what causes it?

Viral gastroenteritis is a common infectious illness causing diarrhoea and sickness. It is spread by faecal-oral contact. Fever and loss of essential fluids and salts from the body can quickly dehydrate babies and young children. Sometimes if the diarrhoea and sickness does not stop, children may need to be admitted to hospital.

What to expect in hospital

You and your child will be welcomed to the ward and shown to a cot or bed in a cubicle. You may stay with your child at all times if you wish. A sample of faeces (poo) may be collected and sent to the lab to test for bugs. This is not always necessary. The results of this test will be available after two or three days.

You will be encouraged to offer small, frequent, amounts of Dioralyte in your child's usual cup or bottle (five mls every five minutes).

Occasionally, if vomiting continues and your child is at risk of dehydration, intravenous fluids may be needed. This is when a fine plastic tube (cannula) is inserted into a vein through which special fluids are pumped straight into the blood stream. Anaesthetic cream is usually applied to numb the skin approximately one hour before the cannula is inserted.

Intravenous fluids will continue until your child can tolerate fluids by mouth.

Breast fed babies should continue to feed as normal. When fluids are beginning to be tolerated a light diet may gradually be re-introduced.

How to stop the spread of infection

It is very important that you, your family and any visitors wash their hands before and after entering the cubicle.

Your child must always wash their hands after going to the toilet and before eating.

If you are changing nappies you should wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. As well as hand washing, the alcohol gel available outside the cubicle and wards should be used before and after leaving the ward.

Going home

Once your child is drinking well and beginning to eat, they will be allowed to go home. Diarrhoea may continue for a few days. You must encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids and gradually increase their diet with bland meals. Ward staff can advise what kind of foods and fluids to give if you are unsure.

Thorough hand washing should continue at home for all the family. The gastroenteritis should resolve itself and your child will begin to feel better soon.

If you have any worries, please do not hesitate to contact ward 10 on 01493 452010 or contact 111.

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

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PALS 01493 453240**