

Vomiting-Diarrhea

Nausea and/or vomiting and/or diarrhea may be symptoms of numerous medical conditions, however, viruses are usually the most common cause. Your body responds by trying to rid itself of the organism. It does this by emptying out your gastrointestinal tract resulting in vomiting and diarrhea. Viral illnesses that cause nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea are usually self-limiting, meaning your body will usually cure itself without any medication within a 1 to 3-day time period. Unless you are experiencing signs of dehydration, the self-care measures listed below may make you more comfortable until the illness is over.

Symptoms of **dehydration** are as follows: If these symptoms occur, see a health care provider immediately.

- urinating small amounts of very dark yellow urine
- headache
- dizziness, or a feeling of mental “fuzziness/fatigue”
- dry mouth and lips associated with increased feelings of thirst.

Self-Care for Nausea and Vomiting:

- Liquids
If you vomit, do not eat or drink anything for **1 hour** because your stomach needs to rest. After 1 hour you may begin to drink one of the following fluids:
Flat soda, lemon-lime or ginger ale, coke that has been opened and the carbonation (*fizz*) has left the soda, water or ice chips, tea (hot or cold), dilute Kool-Aid, Pedialyte or other similar drinks, broth or bouillon—no diet beverages.

Begin by taking small sips (**about a tablespoon**) of **one of the above fluids every 10 to 15 minutes**. If an hour has passed and you have kept the fluids down, increase the amount of each sip by one tablespoon per 10-15 minutes. If vomiting occurs, wait 1 - 2 hours and begin over again. The **KEY** is to gradually increase the amount of fluid you drink until you reach 8 ounces per hour.

- Food
If fluids have stayed down when you hit the 8 ounces per hour and you are feeling hungry, begin with the following foods:
Chicken or beef noodle soups, saltine crackers, dry cereal without milk, pretzels, plain toast or bread, plain cooked pasta or other such foods. Continue this diet until your stomach feels well for 1 day. **Avoid** citrus juices, milk, greasy and/or spicy foods, coffee and alcohol until your stomach feels well for 3 days then gradually place them back into your diet.

Self-Care for Diarrhea:

Diarrhea is defined as frequent watery bowel movements that may be accompanied by lower abdominal cramping. The self-care measures listed below may make you more comfortable until the diarrhea resolves.

- Avoid fruit juices and sugary foods, milk, coffee, raw vegetables, and all foods that normally produce loose stools and gas.
- Water, flat soda, and/or liquids as above should be used to help prevent dehydration.
- If no nausea or vomiting is present, bananas, rice, applesauce, tea and toast may help to solidify your bowel movements.

Make an appointment at your on-campus Student Health Clinic or seek medical attention if any of the following occur:

- Signs of dehydration such as excessive thirst, small amounts of dark urine or no urine for 8 hours, no tears, and/or you become very dizzy when you stand up.
- If you are vomiting so much you can't keep anything down for 1 day.
- Fever lasting 2 to 3 days, greater than 100.4 degrees F or greater
- Excessive drowsiness
- Persistent headache or neck stiffness
- Increased stomach pain
- Diarrhea not getting better in 2 to 3 days
- Bloody vomit or bowel movement (remember that red Kool-Aid or Jell-O can cause red vomit or diarrhea).
- Coffee-grounds-appearing vomit or black, tarry stool

Your health care provider may recommend the following medications to help alleviate your Vomiting-Diarrhea symptoms. ****Follow the recommended dosage on the package label****

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) as needed for nausea and vomiting. Be cautioned that Diphenhydramine may cause drowsiness so use caution while driving. Limit to 300 mg per 24 hours.
- Pepto-Bismol as needed to relieve nausea and diarrhea. **Do not take this drug if you are allergic to aspirin.** This drug may cause a temporary darkening of bowel movements and a brownish coating on the tongue.
- Antacid (Tums) as needed for upset stomach.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) as needed instead of Ibuprofen.
- **Birth control** – Vomiting and diarrhea may decrease the effectiveness of your **birth control**. If you are female, use a back-up method (condoms) until your next period.

Please call to make an appointment at your on-campus Student Health Services Clinic, with your PCP or go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department if your concerns do not improve with conservative self-care treatment or if you have worsening symptoms.

Please know your health problems and allergies. Information contained in this handout is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a Healthcare professional. As new and updated information becomes available, the content may change. Please contact your Healthcare Provider or your on-campus Student Health Services Provider with any questions.

Vomiting-Diarrhea self care handout

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