

Vomiting and Diarrhea in Adults

Normal activities can be disrupted by vomiting or diarrhea which virtually everyone experiences at some point.

They aren't diseases themselves but symptoms, with many possible causes including viruses and other infections; certain medications; underlying illnesses; and spoiled or undercooked food.

“Vomiting and diarrhea can be acute or chronic, depending upon how long they last. Acute symptoms last for a few hours or days. Symptoms that go on for more than a month are considered chronic.”

You can often treat acute vomiting and diarrhea at home. First, drink lots of water, and other liquids to stay hydrated, along with watery foods like clear broth and popsicles. This is crucial because you lose fluids every time you vomit or have diarrhea.

Fluids in the form of sports drinks and oral rehydration solutions can replenish electrolytes like salt and potassium, which your body loses when you're sick. If you're too nauseated to keep fluids down, suck on ice chips or take small sips of water.

As for what to eat, crackers, rice, potatoes, and other bland, high-carb foods are the best choices. Avoid anything high in fat or sugar. Eat your food cold or at room temperature if the smell of cooking turns your stomach. Don't worry if you can't eat, though. It's far more important to get fluids.

Some people find that ginger or ginger ale can help settle an upset stomach. Over-the-counter anti-nausea and diarrhea medicines may also help. If you use these products, follow the package directions carefully. But avoid Ibuprofen and Aspirin.

“Sometimes these medications can cause some stomach upset. It's best to take these medications with food to help prevent some of the stomach upset from it.”

Get medical help right away if you experience: Blood in your vomit or diarrhea, Trouble keeping food or fluids down, Severe abdominal pain, Fever of 101 degrees or higher, Severe headache or stiff neck, Confusion, Dizziness, Rapid breathing or pulse.

“Often vomiting and diarrhea can be successfully managed at home on your own. But if you're not getting better or you have concerns, it's always a good idea to see a health care provider.”