

Diarrhea in Children



Paediatric & Neonatology Department

How often should my child have a bowel movement?

It depends on how old they are:

- In the first week of life, most babies have 4 or more bowel movements each day. They are soft or liquid. It is normal for some babies to have 10 bowel movements in a day.
- In the first 3 months, some babies have 2 or more bowel movements each day. Others have just 1 each week.
- By age 2, most children have at least 1 bowel movement each day. They are soft but solid.
- Every child is different. Some have bowel movements after each meal. Others have bowel movements every other day.

How do I know if my child has diarrhea?

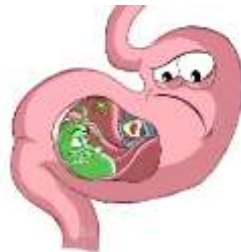
It depends on what's normal for your child:

- For babies, diarrhea means that bowel movements are more runny or watery than normal or happening more often than normal. Your baby might have twice as many bowel movements as they usually have. (In babies, normal bowel movements can be yellow, green, or brown. They can also have things that look like seeds in them.)
- Older children with diarrhea will have 3 or more runny bowel movements in a day.

What are the most common causes of diarrhea in children?

The most common causes are:

- Viruses ("stomach bugs")
- Side effects from antibiotics



What should my child eat and drink when they have diarrhea?

Your child can continue to eat a normal diet.

OK foods include:

- Lean meats
- Rice, potatoes, and bread
- Yogurt
- Fruits and vegetables
- Milk (unless the child has problems digesting milk)



What foods and drinks should my child avoid?

These foods might make diarrhea worse:

- Foods that are high in fat
- Drinks with lots of sugar
- Sports drinks

What can I do to treat my child's diarrhea?

- Make sure they drink enough water and other liquids.
- Avoid diarrhea medicines. They are not usually needed for children, and they might not be safe.

When should I take my child to the doctor?

You should take your child to the doctor if they:

- Has bloody diarrhea
- Is younger than 12 months and won't eat or drink anything for more than a few hours
- Has bad belly pain
- Is not acting like him or herself
- Is low in energy and does not respond to you
- Is dehydrated. Signs include:
 - ✓ Dry mouth
 - ✓ Thirst
 - ✓ No urine or wet diapers for 4 to 6 hours in babies and young children, or 6 to 8 hours in older children
 - ✓ No tears when crying

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