



**M.P. SHAH HOSPITAL**  
A Legacy of Care

# DIARRHOEA IN CHILDREN

## WHAT IS DIARRHOEA?

This is passing loose or watery stool more than 3 times a day as a result of the intestines' inability to absorb fluids.

## WHAT CAUSES DIARRHOEA?

If your child has diarrhoea, it's most likely due to a viral infection. However, there are a few other possible causes and your baby's other symptoms may give you an idea of what's causing it. Some of the most common causes of diarrhoea in babies are:

### 1. VIRUSES

The child's immune system is still developing so they are particularly vulnerable to viruses. The virus can be transmitted from one child to another especially if they don't wash hands after visiting the toilet.

The most common in young children is a virus called Rotavirus – most children get it at some point before they turn five. However, the Rotavirus vaccine (offered from 6 weeks to 8 months) has dramatically reduced the incidence of Rotavirus globally. If your baby has been vaccinated, it's still possible for her/him to get Rotavirus but it's much less likely to be serious compared to the one who is not vaccinated.

#### **Symptoms of Rotavirus include:**

Diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain, lack of appetite and fever.

Treatment is taking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and the doctor may include replacement of lost salts, sugar and minerals by prescribing ORS, Zinc tablets and probiotics to take care of the gut by providing a higher level of good bacteria.

### 2. FOOD POISONING

Food poisoning happens when your baby's milk or food contains bacteria. If your baby is formula-fed, they can get food poisoning if their bottles and teats aren't properly cleaned. If she/he is on solids, the baby can contract it from eating food that is contaminated with bacteria.



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### 3. ALLERGIES

The child may get an allergic reaction due to the food they have eaten. For example, the most common to watch out for are milk, wheat, eggs, fish, red meat and even breastmilk for those with lactose intolerance. It's advisable when weaning to introduce the child to one food at a time and monitor for any allergy before proceeding to a different type.

### 4. ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics can affect the balance of bacteria in your child's gut, which can sometimes lead to diarrhoea. If you suspect that antibiotics could be causing your child's diarrhoea, it's important to inform the doctor for further advice.

### 5. IMMUNISATIONS

Some babies may develop diarrhoea after vaccination but this is likely to be mild and should clear up within a few days.

### 6. PARASITIC INFECTIONS

Babies can also get diarrhoea caused by some parasites if they consume contaminated water. For example, Amoebiasis.

## TREATMENT OF DIARRHOEA

Make an appointment with a doctor if your baby:

- Shows any signs of dehydration such as fewer wet nappies, no tears when she/he cries, a dry mouth, not passing urine or unusual drowsiness.
- Fever, vomiting, and bloody stool.

Hospital staff will give your baby rehydration fluids through a soft tube in his/her nose (nasogastric tube), or via a drip in her arm (intravenous). This will help to replace the salts, sugars and minerals lost from the body due to diarrhoea.

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**e: [clinics@mpshahhosp.org](mailto:clinics@mpshahhosp.org)**

**t: 0204 429 1000 / 0733 606752 / 0722 204427**

