Vomiting (throwing up) is forcefully emptying stomach contents through the mouth or nose. It is a sign that your child is ill.

What causes vomiting?
Vomiting can be caused by:

• A stomach virus
• An unhealthy diet (too many sweets and fats)
• Food poisoning
• Gastroesophageal (GAS-trow-ee-sofa-GEE-ul) reflux, or GER

Your child may also vomit if they have appendicitis (an inflamed appendix) or an intestinal blockage, but these are more rare.

Babies often have wet burps, which are different from vomiting. They lose only small amounts of food (usually less than 1 teaspoon) and don’t feel or act ill. Wet burps can be caused by swallowing air, becoming overexcited, or overfeeding. They may also occur if you burp your baby a certain way or if your baby has food intolerance (the body doesn’t accept the food).

What causes food poisoning, and how can I prevent it?
Food poisoning is caused by bacteria that grows in food. To prevent food poisoning:

• Be careful preparing and storing dairy foods, meat, poultry (chicken and other birds), eggs, fish, seafood, sprouts, and melons.
• Never use food from dented, cracked, or bulging cans.
• Before preparing food and after handling raw food, wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds.
• Thoroughly clean counters, equipment, utensils, and cutting boards before preparing food and immediately after preparing raw food.
• Clean poultry, fruits, and vegetables well before preparing them.
• Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
• Don’t keep foods at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
• Use home-cooked leftovers within 72 hours and take-out food and restaurant leftovers within 48 hours.
• Reheat leftovers only once.
• If in doubt, throw it out.

It’s hard to tell the difference between food poisoning and a stomach virus. A child with food poisoning often vomits constantly and also has constant diarrhea. They will also look and feel ill and weak.

If you think your child has food poisoning, call their doctor or the Poison Control Center (800.222.1222) immediately.
What is gastroesophageal reflux (GER)?
Gastroesophageal reflux (GER) occurs when a muscle at the top of the stomach is weak and allows the stomach contents to flow back into the esophagus and mouth. This usually happens when a baby has a full stomach after being fed. A small amount of reflux is normal in babies, but an otherwise healthy baby who often spits up may have GER.

To help reduce GER:
• Burp your baby often during feedings.
• Hold your baby upright as much as possible during feedings and for about 30 minutes after the feeding.
• Feed your child often with smaller amounts of food.

Many children outgrow GER by 18 months old.

Can vomiting be a sign of appendicitis?
Appendicitis is a less-common cause of vomiting. Signs of appendicitis include:
• Constant pain usually felt first around the belly button that moves to the lower-right abdomen
• Vomiting (after complaining of pain)
• Fever
• Refusing to eat or walk
• Diarrhea
• Fussiness (in small children)

If you think your child might have appendicitis, take them to the doctor or emergency room immediately.

How should I treat vomiting?
If your child is vomiting:
1 Stop feeding them for 1 hour to let their stomach rest.
2 Start giving them clear liquids slowly.
   These may include:
   – An electrolyte drink such as Pedialyte® (especially for children 2 years old and younger) or Gatorade® in older children
   – Water
   – Clear carbonated drink such as Sprite®
   – Gelatin water
3 Make sure your child takes a few sips of liquid every 15–30 minutes. If they don’t vomit, gradually increase the amount of liquid.
4 Begin giving your child bland solid foods appropriate for their age if they can keep clear liquids down for 8 hours without vomiting. These may include:
   – Soda crackers
   – Dry toast
   – Cooked cereals
   – Bananas
   – Rice
   – Applesauce
   – Pasta
5 Start over again with clear liquids if your child vomits after any of these steps.
6 Check your child for signs of dehydration.
What are the signs of dehydration?
Dehydration (DEE-hy-DRAY-shun) occurs when your child is low on body fluids.

Signs of dehydration include:
• A small amount of urine (pee) or dark-yellow colored urine
• Unusual tiredness
• Sunken or dry eyes (no tears)
• Sunken soft spot on top of a baby’s head
• Dry mouth (no spit)
• Dry or wrinkled skin
• No urine for 12 hours or more

A baby younger than 1 year old should have 6-8 wet diapers in a 24-hour period. An older child should urinate at least every 6-8 hours.

When should I call my child’s doctor?
Call your child’s doctor if your child:
• Is very sleepy and unresponsive
• Stays on a liquid diet for more than 1 day
• Has blood in any vomit
• Has green, red, black, or yellow vomit
• Has severe abdominal pain or a swollen belly
• Has a fever above 104°F (children) or 100.4°F (infants)
• Has a severe headache
• Has diarrhea (especially infants)

Notes