

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Abdominal Pain (Stomach Ache)

What is it?

Stomach aches are very common in children and there are many causes. Most stomach aches are not due to a serious illness and children usually get better on their own.

What causes it?

Pain can arise from any structure in the abdomen including the stomach, bowel, kidneys, bladder and other organs. Even severe stomach ache does not always mean your child is suffering from a serious illness. Severe stomach ache can be associated with mild illnesses such as wind pain from drinking too much fizzy drink, eating too much or cramping from constipation or a viral infection. Nevertheless, some serious illnesses can start with relatively mild stomach ache

Some children get abdominal pain as a result of stress.

What are the symptoms like?

Stomach ache can happen suddenly or develop slowly. Your infant or young child may cry and draw their knees up towards their chest when they have a stomach ache. Nonetheless, these symptoms may also be unrelated to stomach aches. They may also have other symptoms that are associated with the cause of the stomach ache, such as vomiting, diarrhoea and/or fever.

When should you contact your local doctor immediately?

If:

- The pain is severe and persists for a prolonged period (such as over several hours) or wakes your child up from sleep at night.
- The pain returns frequently and regularly.
- Your child has a fever (higher than 38.5°C).
- Your child has a rash or appears very pale.
- Your child has persistent vomiting or if any vomit is green or contains blood.
- Your child's poo becomes black or red (which could be blood).
- Your child becomes very tired or drowsy.
- Your child has severe pain elsewhere.
- Your child has swelling of the abdomen or lump(s) in the groin.
- Your child has pain when they pass urine or if the urine contains blood.
- The pain is after an abdominal injury (such as a sports injury).
- In boys: there is pain in the scrotum or testicle or the groin area.
- Your child does not seem to be getting better.

What can you do for your child at home?

- See if your child will lie down & rest.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of clear fluids (give small amounts frequently).
- If they don't want to eat, don't force them.
- Encourage your child to sit on the toilet; sometimes doing a poo helps the pain.

Do not give your child any medications other than simple pain relief medication, such as paracetamol, without first talking to your doctor.

Remember:

Encourage plenty of clear fluids and do not force your child to eat.

Do not give your child any medications without first talking to your doctor.

Contact your local doctor immediately if you are concerned.

For afterhours GP help, call Healthdirect 1800 022 222