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What is acute gastro-enteritis in young children?

Gastritis is usually a benign disease even if at times it can be a threat to child's life.

Gastritis is an inflammation of both gastric and intestinal mucosa due to certain viruses, bacteria, parasites or other toxic causes.

The major symptom for gastritis is acute diarrhoea with a possible risk of acute dehydration, which makes gastritis a serious condition, as said above.

Viral gastritis is quite common amongst children at winter time. It ranks first amongst the reasons why babies

are taken to hospital.

Gastritis is usually a benign disease even if at times it can be a threat to child's life.

Most times, the attack comes from rotavirus+++ (other viruses may be calivirus, adenovirus or coronavirus), from *Escherichia coli*, *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, from *vibrio cholerae* or certain other parasites (*Giarda*, *Amoebae*, &).

For effective treatment, it is essential to give baby liquid and solid food again as soon as possible.

Clinical picture

◆ **Weight loss** above 5% is a sure sign for dehydration.

◆ **Dehydration can take a bad turn if:**

- baby is below 3 months of age and has related diseases;
- baby's family background and living conditions are poor or debased.

◆ **Diagnosis is positive** if clinical signs for gastritis show the usual symptoms in their usual virus-caused forms (acute liquid diarrhoea, stomach cramps and upset stomach, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, low-grade fever).

What treatments are available and appropriate?

◆ **Therapeutic management is targeted to:**

- ward off and/or make up for any losses in hydro-electrolytic fluids (*id* dehydration);
- ward off denutrition and shorten the diarrhoea period.

The two main ways to gain effective treatment include taking rehydration solutions (ORS's) and taking food again as soon as possible.

◆ **To bringabout oral rehydration**, make sure the first ORS dose (a full sachet in 200 mL water) is given to baby right after she/he's had her/his first watery stools and the following doses are given until her/his stools are back to normal.

Risk of vomiting can be curbed if sachet contents are given out in small amounts, every 5 to 10 minutes,

over a period of 30 minutes, even if she/he has kept vomiting until then.

Pure or soda water are not recommended as they are hyperosmolar beverage, *ie* they are poor in sodium and potassium.

◆ **About giving food again as soon as possible:**

carry on breast-feeding while it alternates with RSO doses. To small babies under 4 months of age, mothers can give a milk substitute including hydrolised proteins. An anti-diarrhoea drug/tablet, such as racécadotril (Tiorfan®), can possibly be prescribed for adjuvant treatment.

◆ **Washing hands** is required before and after giving treatment to baby, changing baby clothes and giving baby food.

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Can I help you?

A worried mother has come to the pharmacy because her 1-year-old Charles has had fever, (38.5 C/101.30 F) and intestinal leakage.

Her GP has prescribed sachets of Tiorfan®, twice a day.

- ♦ **“What’s bringing you along?**
  - Charles can’t take food any more these days. And he’s no more like he was as usual. I’m badly afraid.
- ♦ **Has he been losing wait lately?**
  - I don’t know. I haven’t got scales at home. He weighed 10 kilos/20 pounds when I took him to the doctor, last time.
  - It’s most important to monitor Charles’s weight

with a baby-scales. I’ll deliver you one. Remember that any loss of weight that is above half a kilo requires seeing your GP.

- ♦ **Do you give Charles what to drink enough?**
  - Yes, but it’s hard for him to drink anything!
  - What matters anyway is that you give him adequate amounts of some nice and cold drink with sugar enough in it. I’ll give you an ORS. You’ll dilute the solution in 200 mL water that he’ll drink whenever he wants during the day. Make sure you keep the diluted solution in the fridge all day, 24 hours, that is.”

Reading aid

- Anyway:** en tout cas.
- Available and appropriate:** disponibles et pertinents.
- Baby’s family background poor or debased:** environnement familial du bébé, médiocre ou délabré.
- Benign disease :** maladie bénigne.
- A threat to child’s life:** une menace pour la vie de l’enfant.
- Bring about:** rétablir.
- Carry on breast-feeding while:** l’allaitement se poursuit tandis que.
- Curbed:** réduit.
- Fridge:** frigo.
- GP:** omni-praticien.
- What’s bringing you along?:** Qu’est-ce qui vous amène ?
- Has kept vomiting until then:** a continué à vomir jusqu’à ce moment-là.
- He weighed:** il pesait.
- Intestinal leakage:** (sortes de) selles liquides.
- Losing weight lately:** perdu du poids ces derniers temps.
- Low-grade fever:** fébricule.
- Monitor:** surveiller.
- Nice and cold drink :** boisson bien fraîche.
- Related diseases:** maladies associées.
- Required:** nécessaire.
- Scales :** une balance.
- Serious condition:** pathologie grave.
- Shorten:** raccourcir.
- Take a bad turn:** s’aggraver.
- Targeted to:** a pour but de.
- Ward off and/or make up for:** éviter et/ou compenser.
- Watery stools:** selles liquides.
- Weight loss:** perte de poids.
- Worried mother:** mère inquiète.

Diclosure of interest
The authors declare that they
have no competing interest.