

Tummy Troubles

Natural remedies can help reset your child's upset stomach. BY CYNTHIA RAMNARACE

IT IS A SENTENCE THAT ANY parent dreads hearing: "My tummy hurts."

Stomach ailments are perplexing: Was it something she ate? Is she nervous about today's test? Or is she actually sick? Fortunately, a number of natural remedies can help alleviate stomach and digestive troubles.

The next time your child complains of one of these four common ailments, tame her tummy with a natural antidote.

CONSTIPATION

CAUSES Triggers include everything from food sensitivity to an unwillingness to have a bowel movement without a parent present. Dehydration and a low-fiber diet can also be culprits.

SYMPTOMS A newborn is considered constipated if he goes more than a day without a bowel movement and if his stool is firm. In an older child, it's three days without a bowel movement. Kids may experience abdominal pain or nausea and have stool stains on their underwear. They may also start fighting the urge to "go."

REMEDIES Apple or prune juice can help infants, but ask the doctor before treating your baby's constipation at home, in case it's a sign of a more serious illness. For older children, New York-based natur-

opathic physician Dr. Donielle Wilson suggests high-fiber fruits such as kiwis, as well as omega-3 supplements. Flaxseed or psyllium husk powders, which can be added to food, are also good for bulking up stool.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR For newborns, call if there has been no stool for four days. For older children, call if the constipation lasts more than two weeks, if hemorrhoids or tears around the rectum occur, if there is leakage or if the child is unable to pass stool.

Did You Know?

The most common cause of abdominal pain in kids is constipation. Natural treatments include apple juice and high-fiber foods like kiwis.

DIARRHEA

CAUSES In children, gastrointestinal viruses are the most common culprit. Other causes include food allergies, antibiotics and food poisoning.

SYMPTOMS Diarrhea is characterized by loose, watery stools that occur more than once a day, often accompanied by cramping.

REMEDIES Probiotic-rich foods such as yogurt can help the immune system fight off viruses, says Dr. Steven Pratt, author of *Superfoods Rx: Fourteen Foods That Will Change Your Life*.

Foods rich in polyphenols, an antioxidant, are also helpful. According to Dr. Pratt, the antiviral properties of blueberries make them one of the best foods to treat diarrhea. Blackberry leaf tea can soothe the intestinal wall, says herbalist Jessie Hawkins, owner of Vintage Remedies in Tennessee. If you suspect a milk allergy is the culprit, try switching to goat's milk, which is easier to digest.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR If your child shows signs of dehydration, including crying without tears, high fever, listlessness and sunken eyes, call immediately. Blood in the stool also warrants a call.



GAS AND COLIC

CAUSES Gas is most often triggered by food. Some doctors believe that colic (which occurs between 10 days and three months of age) might also be caused by foods ingested via breast milk.

SYMPTOMS A baby with colic will often cry inconsolably and pull her legs up to her chest. Gas is only a problem if it becomes painful or excessive.

REMEDIES Try switching formula-fed infants to a soy-based product. For breastfed babies, Dr. Wilson suggests moms eliminate garlic, broccoli, dairy and gluten from their diets. (These foods can also cause gas in older children.) Probiotic supplements can help kids of all ages. For colic, Dr.

Wilson recommends cooled fennel tea or Hyland's Colic Tablets, which contain chamomile and colocynt, to ease abdominal pains.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR For newborns, call if crying persists for more than three hours. In all children, seek medical care if gas is accompanied by fever, vomiting, diarrhea or bloody stools.

NAUSEA AND VOMITING

CAUSES In infants, it can be caused by feeding problems, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) or hypertrophic pyloric stenosis, a condition that blocks food from entering the intestines. In older children, vomiting is most often caused by a viral illness.



PLEASE NOTE:

Use these remedies for occasional cases of stomach upset. Persistent problems require a doctor's attention. Speak with your pediatrician or naturopath before using homeopathic remedies on your child.

SYMPTOMS Vomiting is different from spitting up, and GERD-induced vomiting is often accompanied by coughing, irritability and poor weight gain.

REMEDIES Cooled peppermint tea, ginger ale made with real ginger, and peppermint lozenges can help alleviate symptoms, Hawkins says. Gripe water—a blend of chamomile, peppermint, fennel and other natural stomach soothers—can reduce GERD symptoms in some infants.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR Seek medical attention immediately when there is persistent vomiting in a child less than four months of age. Also call if your child is unable to keep down clear liquids or becomes dehydrated.



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