

## Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary

**Title:** Using medication to prevent vomiting in children with the stomach flu may lower the need for needle pokes and hospital stays.

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### **Plain Language Summary:**



#### **What makes children throw up?**

Vomiting or “throwing up” is common in children and can be caused by a viral stomach infection. Children vomit, cannot keep food and drinks down and become dehydrated.

#### **What is Dehydration?**

Dehydration is water lost from the body. When low on water, the body makes less urine and the skin and mouth become dry and sticky. Water is needed for the body to work normally. When dehydrated children feel sick or weak and may not want to eat or drink especially if they are vomiting.

#### **If my child is sick and vomiting what should I do?**

Follow instructions from [kidshealth.com](http://kidshealth.com);

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/sheets/vomiting\\_sheet.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/sheets/vomiting_sheet.html)

If your child keeps vomiting and cannot keep food or drinks down. Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department.

#### **What will the doctor do?**

Viral stomach infections are treated with rehydration, which puts water back into the body. Some dehydrated children need to stay in the hospital and get an intravenous (IV) drip. An IV drips a water / salt mixture into the body into the bloodstream but the child’s skin must be poked with a needle to get to the bloodstream.

When a child stops vomiting, he/she stops losing water, and water re-enters the body through food and drink. A pill may be given by doctors in a clinic or in the emergency room to help children stop vomiting.

#### **Why should my child take a pill to stop vomiting?**

Anti- vomiting pills, like *Zofran*, may help children to keep fluid in their bodies and stay out of the hospital when infected with a stomach virus. The pill is given to children who are normally healthy but have a stomach infection. Children who take *Zofran* are more likely to;

- Stop vomiting completely.
- Go home from the Emergency department and not stay in the hospital
- Keep water and food down

Children who take *Zofran* and go home may continue to feel sick and should return to the doctor.

Children who do not take the *Zofran* pill will stop vomiting eventually but are more likely to;

- Need an IV drip to feed water into the bloodstream
- Need to stay in the hospital

*Zofran* does not rehydrate the body. *Zofran* can only stop water loss because it lowers the chance that the child will throw up. The *Zofran* pill is used when the dehydrated child is able to drink. These sick children still need to drink after taking the medication.

### **Do all children with the stomach flu need Zofran?**

No. Your doctor may NOT feel *Zofran* or an IV drip is needed for your child to feel better. Most child with the stomach flu stop vomiting without any medication. These children must drink and eat to feel better and to rehydrate.

### **What are the side effects of Zofran?**

The most common side effect of *Zofran* is loose stool. You can read about other side effects of Zofran (also called ondansetron) at website below;  
<http://kidshealth.org/parent/medications/ondansetron.html>

### **Additional Resources:**

For more information on the stomach flu read;

[http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill\\_injure/sick/stomach\\_flu.html](http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill_injure/sick/stomach_flu.html)

More information on dehydration read;

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/emergencies/dehydration.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/emergencies/dehydration.html)

### **Key Words:**

Throwing up, stomach flu, Dehydration, Zofran, Acute Gastroenteritis

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