

I. ABDOMINAL PAIN

● What is abdominal pain?

Abdominal pain is a symptom, a discomfort. There are many causes of abdominal pain; in general, they are usually acute and due to gastrointestinal problems; most of the time can be managed with medications and observation at home. However, certain causes of abdominal pain are not easy to diagnose and may be masked by medications, therefore it requires close and careful observation.

● Nursing care and instructions:

1. When abdominal pain occurs, one should avoid food intake and observe its progression or changes.
2. During diarrheas, observe stool colors and other characteristics such as bloody diarrhea or tarry stools; check the amount, frequency, etc.

3. Observe frequency of vomiting, color of vomitus and other characteristics.
4. Within 6 hours after improvement of abdominal pain, one may try drinking some water; if no longer in pain, may try rice water, light porridge, white toast, etc at small frequent feedings.
5. The following conditions may require immediate medical attention: fever, rebound tenderness or intractable pain with referred pain to the right lower abdomen, persistent vomiting, anorexia, vomiting of blood, black tarry stools or blood in stools, sudden severe back or flank pain, cold sweats, cold clammy skin and pallor, rapid breathing or difficulty of breathing.



II. VOMITING

● What is vomiting?

Vomiting is due to diaphragmatic contractions and abdominal spasm, causing food and gastrointestinal contents to be pumped out to the esophagus and then to the oral cavity and out.

● Nursing care and instructions:

1. Maintain a patent airway, lie down on the side.
2. Observe amount of vomitus, color, smell, etc. rinse mouth with clean water after vomiting to promote oral hygiene.
3. Fast for 6-8 hours, then may try feeding in small amounts such as clear broth, rice water, light toast, soft vegetables, rice noodles. Avoid milk or dairy products.
4. If vomiting is persistent or projectile in character, contact a physician right away.

III. DIARRHEA

- **What is diarrhea?**

Diarrhea is characterized as watery stools or sandy loose stools in increased frequency and usually associated with gastrointestinal colic.

- **Nursing care and instructions:**

1. Observe stool amount, character, smell and color.
2. If diarrhea is persistent especially if it's bloody or mucoid--notify your doctor ASAP.
3. Maintain rectal hygiene and cleanliness.
4. NPO for 6-8 hours, then give small frequent feedings if needed with clear broth, easy to digest foods such as porridge, sports drink, light toast, cooked vegetables or rice noodles.

5. Avoid milk or dairy products within 2-5 days of diarrhea.



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(Picture taken from the Internet)

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Primer on Abdominal Pain, Vomiting and Diarrhea: Nursing Care and Instructional Manual

Modern Medicine
Traditional Care