

SETTING

Emergency Department

PARENT

You are the parent of a four-year-old boy who came to the Emergency Department two hours ago after 36 hours of recurrent vomiting and stomach pain. The doctor told you that your son had viral gastroenteritis. He was kept in for two hours on oral re-hydration fluids and now the doctor tells you that it is safe for him to return home. You are anxious and confused about his condition.

TASK

- When asked, explain that you don't really understand much about your son's condition or what viral gastroenteritis is.
- Ask how your son got this and whether it is infectious.
- Say that your son looks very weak and you really think he needs to be kept in hospital; this is the best place for him.
- Admit that you don't feel confident about being able to look after your son at home, or if he will actually improve there.
- Reluctantly agree to take your son home.

SETTING

Emergency Department

DOCTOR

A parent presented two hours ago at the Emergency Department with his/her four-year-old son. The boy had a 36-hour history of recurrent vomiting and stomach pain which was diagnosed as viral gastroenteritis. He was given oral re-hydration fluids and observed for two hours. You have just told the parent that it is safe to discharge him. The parent seems anxious.

TASK

- Find out about the parent's concerns.
- Explain viral gastroenteritis (an irritation of stomach or intestines due to viral infection, etc.).
- Give information about how gastroenteritis is spread (contact with vomit/faeces of an infected person, e.g., shaking hands, contaminated foods/objects, etc.).
- Resist request to keep patient in hospital (oral re-hydration therapy is usually effective, etc.). Advise on hydration and appropriate 'clear fluids' (e.g., watered down unsweetened fruit juice, electrolyte hydration preparations such as Gastrolyte, etc.).
- Convince the parent that it is safe to take his/her son home. Advise when to seek medical advice (signs of severe dehydration, e.g., extreme thirst, lethargy, irritability, pale/sunken eyes, etc.).