

Stomach Flu (Gastroenteritis)

The most common way to develop viral gastroenteritis — often called stomach flu — is through contact with an infected person or by ingesting contaminated food or water. It is **EXTREMELY CONTAGIOUS**. Symptoms appear one to three days after exposure to the virus. You are contagious before you even begin to develop symptoms. Even after you've recovered from your symptoms, you can remain contagious for up to two weeks.

If you've got viral gastroenteritis, you should start to feel better after two or three days. While food poisoning due to other causes hits you harder and faster, it goes away faster too; you may be back to normal in a day or two.

Symptoms:

- Watery, usually non-bloody diarrhea — bloody diarrhea usually means you have a different, more severe infection
- Abdominal cramps and pain
- Nausea, vomiting or both
- Low-grade fever
- Occasional muscle aches or headache

Treatment:

- Let your stomach settle. Stop eating solid foods for a few hours.
- Try sucking on ice chips or taking small sips of water. You might also try drinking clear soda, clear broths or non-caffeinated sports drinks.
- Ease back into eating. Stop eating if your nausea returns.
- Avoid certain foods and substances until you feel better. These include dairy products, caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and fatty or highly seasoned foods.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Be cautious with medications. Use many medications, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Aleve, others), sparingly if at all. They can make your stomach more upset. Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) cautiously; it sometimes can cause liver toxicity, especially in children. Don't give aspirin to children or teens because of the risk of Reye's syndrome, a rare, but potentially fatal disease.
- Use OTC medications for diarrhea like Bismuth tablets or Imodium as directed

Return to see doctor if symptoms last more than 48 hours

Liquid Progression Diet

- DO NOT eat dairy products, citrus fruits, or juices, pies, tomato products
- DO for the first 12 hours:
 - Frequent small sips at room temperature
 - Clear liquids, broth or jello
 - No diet sodas (need some sugar intake)
 - Gatorade or Pedialyte
- For the next 12 hours (if diarrhea has stopped):
 - add bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast (BRAT diet) as tolerated
- Thereafter, add food as tolerated. Avoid spicy and fried foods for several days after stools have regulated.

Notify the doctor:

- You're not able to keep liquids down for 24 hours
- You've been vomiting for more than two days
- You're vomiting blood
- You're dehydrated — signs of dehydration include excessive thirst, dry mouth, deep yellow urine or little or no urine, and severe weakness, dizziness or lightheadedness
- You notice blood in your bowel movements
- You have a fever above 104 F (40 C)