

GASTROENTERITIS

Acute gastroenteritis is defined as a diarrheal illness of rapid onset that lasts less than two weeks and may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, fever, or abdominal pain. Both vomiting and diarrhea are usually present; however, either can occur alone

Most cases of acute infectious gastroenteritis are viral, with norovirus being the most common. In addition to large outbreaks from consumption of contaminated food and water, noroviruses are efficiently spread person-to-person. Viral gastroenteritis has pronounced peaks in the winter and spring. **Effective handwashing is essential to prevent person to person spread** as well avoidance of contaminated food, drinks and surfaces.

Diet and Treatment Advice

For patients with acute nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea

1. Use medication only if recommended by your clinician.
2. Increase your intake of fluids containing water and a moderate amount of salt and sugar
 - Soup - clear broth, miso soup, bouillon
 - Drinks - tea, apple juice, non caffeinated soda, Gatorade, Pedialyte
 - Other - Jello, popsicles
 - *Avoid soda as this can make diarrhea worse
3. Eat as tolerated
 - Adequate nutrition is important, however if you do not have an appetite, a liquid-only diet is okay for a short period of time.
 - Smaller meals are less likely to cause vomiting than others
 - Bland, low-residue or low-fiber diets (for example, cooked vegetables without skins or seeds) may also be better tolerated
 - Dairy products can be more difficult to digest, so temporary avoidance (for 3-5 days, or until your symptoms have largely resolved) may help
 - Avoid fatty foods, dairy, alcohol, caffeine until your symptoms have resolved
 - Foods that can be easy to digest are:

Potatoes	Boiled vegetables
Noodles	Saltine crackers
Rice	Apple sauce
Oatmeal	Bananas
4. Prompt evaluation by a clinician should occur if any of the following occurs or continues:
 - Persistent vomiting
 - More than 6 watery bowel movements in 24 hours
 - Bloody stools; black/tarry stools
 - Definite abdominal tenderness with cough, sneezing, or straining.
 - Fever over 101F

Symptoms of dehydration: weakness, dizziness, fainting, dark yellow urine, confusion, dry mouth and tongue, muscle cramps, headaches, decreased urinary output, no urination for over 5 hours. You'll know you are drinking enough if your urine is a light yellow color.

HAND WASHING GUIDELINES

While you are ill with a diarrheal illness, do not:

- Prepare foods for others
- Share eating utensils or drinking cups
- Share towels

Stay home from work especially if working with children and/or you prepare food for others until symptoms resolve.

Since person-to-person spread can play a significant role in the spread of some diseases, hand hygiene is very important.

Steps to proper hand washing...

1. Hands should be washed using soap and warm, running water
2. Hands should be rubbed vigorously during washing for at least 20 seconds with special attention paid to the backs of the hands, wrists, between the fingers and under the fingernails
3. Hands should be rinsed well while leaving the water running
4. With the water running, hands should be dried with a paper towel
5. Turn off the water using a paper towel, covering washed hands to prevent re-contamination.

Hands should be washed after the following activities:

- After using the toilet
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or disposable tissue, using tobacco, eating or drinking
- After handling soiled equipment or utensils
- Before and after food preparation, as often as necessary to remove soil and contamination
- Before and after switching between working with raw food (meat, fish, poultry) and working with ready-to-eat food such as bagged salads.
- After engaging in other activities that contaminate the hands.

When soap and water is not available, hand sanitizers containing 60-90% ethyl alcohol or isopropanol by concentration, may be used.

Check our Website: uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this and other medical concerns.

For **Appointments:** etang.berkeley.edu or call 510-642-2000 For **Advice:** call 510-643-7197