

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is the **inflammation of stomach and intestines**. It is usually caused by **viruses**, and less commonly by **bacteria** or **parasites**.

A viral gastroenteritis is usually not serious and its symptoms will normally disappear within 1 to 3 days. The main symptoms of gastroenteritis are: **diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fever, nausea and vomiting**.

Foods to eat: pasta, rice, lean meats, low-fat cooked fish, eggs, bread, yogurt, sugar-free cereals.

Foods/drinks to avoid: fruit juices with added sugars, sport drinks, carbonated drinks, caffeinated drinks, fried foods, ice-cream, fruits canned in syrup, sweet cereals, candy, chocolate, spicy food.

How does gastroenteritis spread?

A viral gastroenteritis is easily transmitted from one person to the next through hands or touch. If people with the virus don't wash their hands, they can spread it to food or liquids they touch.

Do I need tests?

No, blood or urine tests are usually not necessary.

Do I need antibiotics?

No, antibiotics should not be used to treat an uncomplicated viral gastroenteritis. Antibiotics treat bacterial, not viral infections and can cause unwanted side effects.

How do I treat a viral gastroenteritis?

The main complication of gastroenteritis is dehydration and loss of mineral salts. Therefore, it is important to drink a glass of rehydration fluid multiple times during the day. Homemade rehydration fluid can be made by adding 1 tablespoon of salt and 6 tablespoons of sugar added to 1 liter of clean water.

Try to eat as normally as possible: start by eating small amounts of food. Then, gradually increase quantities depending on your appetite and the improvement of your condition.

How can I prevent spreading gastroenteritis?

People who get gastroenteritis are contagious from the onset of their symptoms and can transmit the disease for up to two weeks after symptoms go away.

Wash your hands often with soap and water!

Regularly disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated by stool or vomit. If possible, avoid preparing meals for others.

Disclaimer: The information in this publication is not meant to replace the advice of a health professional. If you have any questions about your health please contact a health professional.

Resources: UpToDate.com, American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)

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