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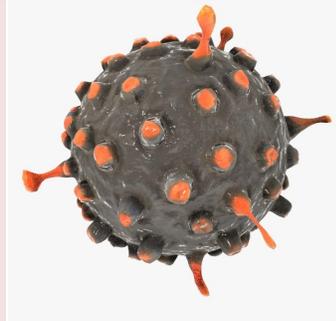
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Gastroenteritis



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St. Maarten Medical Center

Gastroenteritis

When you have diarrhea and vomiting, you may say you have the “*stomach flu.*” What it's really called is gastroenteritis. Although it may make you feel pretty bad, it's an illness that actually has nothing to do with the real flu.

In gastroenteritis, your stomach and intestines are irritated and inflamed. The cause is typically a viral or bacterial infection.



Gastroenteritis and Children

Children can get dehydrated quickly, so if your child has the stomach flu, it's important that you look for signs that he is very thirsty, or has dry skin or a dry mouth. If you have a baby, look for fewer, drier diapers.

Keep children with gastroenteritis out of day care or school until all symptoms are gone.

Check with your doctor before giving your child any medicine or bush tea.

Drugs used to control diarrhea and vomiting aren't usually given to children younger than five.

Gastroenteritis might be caused by one of the following:

- ◆ Viruses; which is the most common cause
- ◆ Bacteria such as E.coli and salmonella
- ◆ Contact with someone who has the virus
- ◆ Undercooked poultry and eggs
- ◆ Contact with pet droppings/wastes
- ◆ Contaminated/spoiled food
- ◆ Unwashed hands after going to the bathroom
- ◆ Unwashed hands after changing a diaper
- ◆ Metal contaminants in unfiltered drinking water
- ◆ Eating a lot of acidic foods, like citrus fruit and tomatoes
- ◆ Toxins that might be found in certain seafood
- ◆ Medications such as antibiotics, antacids and laxatives
- ◆ Herbs and bushes used for teas and drinks are known to have natural chemicals that may cause gastroenteritis.

Control and Prevention

Gastroenteritis can be easily passed on from person to person. Therefore, you and your child need to take measures to try to reduce this chance.

If your baby has gastroenteritis, be especially careful to wash your hands after changing diapers and before preparing, serving, or eating food. ***Ideally, use liquid soap in warm running water, but any soap is better than none. Dry your hands properly after washing.***

Make sure your child washes their hands after going to the toilet.

If a potty is used, wear gloves when you handle it, dispose of the contents into a toilet, then wash the potty with hot water and detergent and leave it to dry.

If clothing or bedding is soiled, first remove any feces into the toilet. Then wash in a separate wash at as high a temperature as possible.

Do not let your child share towels and flannels nor help to prepare food for others.

They should stay away from school, nursery, etc., until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhea or vomiting. They should also avoid contact with other children, where possible, during this time.

Food hygiene

Practicing good food hygiene will help you avoid getting gastroenteritis from food poisoning. You should:

- ◆ Regularly wash your hands, surfaces and utensils with hot soapy water.
- ◆ Never store raw and cooked foods together.
- ◆ Make sure that food is properly refrigerated.
- ◆ Always cook your food thoroughly.
- ◆ Never eat food that is past its 'use by' date.

Travelling

If you are travelling to a country where the standards of public hygiene are low and there is a risk of water contamination, such as in some African or Asian countries, avoid the following food and drink:

- ◆ tap water
- ◆ mayonnaise
- ◆ ice cream
- ◆ shellfish
- ◆ eggs
- ◆ salads
- ◆ sauces
- ◆ peeled fruit
- ◆ fruit juices; if sold by a street vendor
- ◆ raw or undercooked meat



The BTC Diet

The **Bouillon – Tea - Coke diet** is a special diet regimen to prevent further dehydration and to replace the essential electrolytes and fluids your body loses during episodes of vomiting and diarrhea.

Bouillon soup is a bland, clear soup that can be made at home using store-bought bouillon cubes. Its moderate salt content replaces the electrolytes lost from your body.



Black teas are safe to drink when you have Gastroenteritis. It soothes abdominal cramps and helps you relax. Adding a little bit of sugar also helps too.



Coke is a mixture of water and sugar; both your body needs and must be replenished. A thing to remember though is that the soda must be room temperature and free from bubbles (known as “flat”).



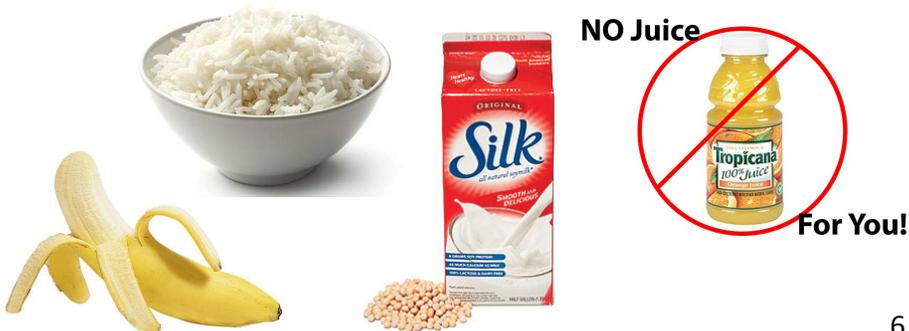
This can be done by setting aside a glass of coke for several minutes until the bubbles are gone.

Follow Up

Gradually ease daily, normal food back into the child's diet.

Start with bland, easy-to-digest food such as crackers, bananas, toast, rice, and chicken. Avoid giving any kind of juices until complete recovery. Juices causes belly cramps and aggravates diarrhea. Especially Apple juice!

If the gastroenteritis is caused by milk intolerance, talk with your doctor for dairy-free milk alternatives.



Symptoms of Gastroenteritis

The common symptoms you probably have are:

- ◆ Watery diarrhea
- ◆ Vomiting
- ◆ Stomach pain and cramping
- ◆ Fever
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Bloating



The diarrhea is mild to moderate: 2 to 4 loose stools a day for teens and adults. For babies, it typically means the stools seep through the diapers.

More serious symptoms include:

- ◆ Vomit or stool that contains blood
- ◆ Long-duration vomiting, such as more than 48 hours
- ◆ Fever that is 38.3°C (101 °F) or higher
- ◆ Abdominal swelling
- ◆ Pain in the right lower side of the abdomen

Food Poisoning and Botulism

The child may have food poisoning from eating from a contaminated canned food or spoiled food.

Signs of food poisoning:

- ◆ Others who ate the food are also sick
- ◆ Nausea and vomiting
- ◆ Abdominal pain and cramping
- ◆ Watery diarrhea
- ◆ Fever



Symptoms of food poisoning may start within hours of eating the food in question.

Gastroenteritis due to eating from canned/bottled food may be the disease **Botulism** instead. Botulism is a life-threatening disease. Seek medical assistance right away.

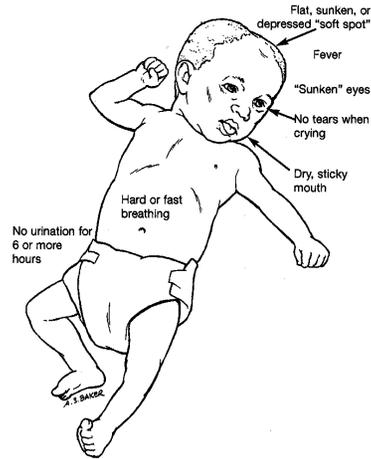
Dehydration

Because of diarrhea and vomiting, your child also can become dehydrated. Severe dehydration is usually the main cause of deaths from gastroenteritis especially with children.

Look for signs of dehydration, such as dry skin and a dry mouth, feeling lightheaded, and being really thirsty.

Other signs of dehydration are:

- ◆ Little to no urination
- ◆ Lack of tears
- ◆ Sunken eyes
- ◆ Muscle weakness
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Lack of alertness
- ◆ Rapid breathing and heartbeat
- ◆ Blurred or double vision
- ◆ Trouble swallowing or breathing



Prevent Dehydration

Give a child an oral rehydration solution.

Give as much **clear fluid**; such as water & black tea, as tolerated. Although, it should be given slowly in frequent, small amounts. Drinking too much too fast can worsen nausea.

Call your health care provider for age-appropriate dosing specifics.



Seek medical help when:

- ◆ Vomiting in a **child age 2 or older** lasts more than 1 day, has a fever or severe diarrhea; large amounts of loose stool every 1 to 2 hours, lasts more than 2 days.
- ◆ A child **under age 2** has vomiting or diarrhea for more than 12 hours or has a fever with vomiting and diarrhea.
- ◆ Vomit or diarrhea turns bloody or tarry.
- ◆ The child is known or is at risk for kidney, liver or heart diseases and must restrict fluid intake.
- ◆ The child develops sudden, severe abdominal pain.

Common Food to Avoid

Fried/Oily Food

Eating fried foods, which are high in fat, can result in diarrhea. Rich sauces, fatty cuts of meat, and buttery or creamy desserts can cause problems, too.



Citrus Fruits and Juices

Because citrus fruit is high in fiber, it can cause an upset stomach for some people. Go easy on oranges, grapefruit, and other citrus fruits if your digestion is feeling queasy.

Artificial Sugar

Chewing too much sugar-free gum made or food prepared with the artificial sweetener **sorbitol** has been found to cause diarrhea and cramping. Eating more than 50 grams of sorbitol a day may give you intestinal trouble because our bodies can't digest sorbitol.



Beans

A common source of trouble, beans contain indigestible sugars that can cause gas and cramping.

Cabbage and its Cousins

Cabbage, broccoli, and other cruciferous vegetables contain the same indigestible sugars that make beans gassy. Their high fiber content can also make them hard to digest if eaten in excess. Cooking can help reduce the problem.

Fructose

Foods sweetened with fructose; including sodas, candy, fruit juice, and pastries, are difficult for some children to digest, leading to diarrhea, bloating, cramping, and other distress.



Spicy Foods

The hot ingredient in chili peppers, called *capsaicin*, may trigger heartburn.

Dairy Products

If dairy products trigger diarrhea, bloating, and gas, the child may be lactose intolerant. This means the child cannot digest the milk proteins.