

Vomiting and Diarrhea

Most of the time vomiting and diarrhea are caused by "gastroenteritis," sometimes known as the "stomach flu." Although it is not truly caused by the flu virus, vomiting and diarrhea is often caused by other types of viruses, most commonly norovirus.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms usually appear within 12 to 48 hours after exposure to a gastroenteritis-causing virus and last for 1-3 days

- Abdominal cramps
- Liquid stools, sometimes up to 8-10 times in a day
- "Gurgling" in belly
- Nausea
- Vomiting

Other Associated Symptoms:

- Fever
- Chills
- Loss appetite
- Weight loss
- Tiredness
- Muscle aches
- Headaches

How should I care for myself when I have vomiting and diarrhea?

The best approach is to rest your stomach and intestines, while staying hydrated.

1. Do not eat or drink fluids for 1-2 hours after vomiting.
2. After two hours of resting your stomach, take two ounces of clear liquids each hour for 3 to 4 hours. Drink little sips frequently, rather than large amounts at once.
3. Then increase to 4 ounces per hour for 3 to 4 hours.
4. If vomiting stops, continue to gradually increase clear liquids. If still vomiting, return to step 1.
5. Resting as much as possible helps to decrease diarrhea.
6. Avoid smoking.
7. If medication is ordered, take as directed.
8. If vomiting and diarrhea return, resume your clear liquid diet.

Vomiting and diarrhea may be contagious, so it is important to wash your hands well after using the bathroom.

When Vomiting Stops

When vomiting stops, and/or diarrhea slows down, begin a bland diet:

- Bananas
- Rice, pasta (cooked)
- Applesauce
- Toast/White bread
- Soft boiled/poached egg
- Plain crackers (like Ritz)
- Soup with noodles

Avoid large meals, coffee, alcohol, fatty, greasy foods, highly seasoned or spiced foods, salad dressing, oil, butter, and raw vegetables until you feel better. Follow a bland diet for 1 to 2 days.

If you are experiencing unexpected or severe symptoms please contact Health Services at (216) 368-2450.



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For Diarrhea Only

For diarrhea only, push clear liquids as tolerated a minimum of 2 to 3 quarts per day. Some examples of clear liquids are as follows:

- Room temperature sports drinks (like Gatorade) for older children and adults; electrolyte and fluid replacement solutions (like Pedialyte) for younger children; babies can continue to drink breast milk or formula along with extra fluids.
- Broth (non-cream). Drink 1/4 to 1/2 cup every 1/2 to 1 hour while awake. Avoid extreme hot or cold liquids.
- For 1 week: No fatty or greasy foods, milk products, fast food, hot and spicy foods, alcohol or caffeine products, acidic foods, and citrus foods or fluids.

Medications

If the diarrhea is severe, consider taking one of the following:

1. Loperamide (Imodium- over the counter medication) 2 mg caplets, take 2 caplets by mouth after 1st loose stool, then 1 caplet after each subsequent loose stool for a maximum of 8 caplets in 24 hours. Do not take longer than 2 days.
2. Pepto-Bismol (take as directed- over the counter medication)
3. Do NOT give medications to treat diarrhea to children.
4. Antibiotics do NOT work for viruses
5. If you need something for a fever, Tylenol/acetaminophen is easier on your stomach than Motrin/ibuprofen.

Call Health Services at (216) 368-2450 if you develop any new prolonged or more severe symptoms of illness:

- Signs of dehydration such as excessive thirst, small amounts of dark urine or no urine for 8 hours, no tears, and/or you become very dizzy when you stand up.
- If you are vomiting so much you can't keep anything down for 24 hours
- Fever lasting 48 to 72 hours or greater than 102 degrees
- Excessive drowsiness
- Continuing headache or neck stiffness
- Increased stomach pain
- Diarrhea not getting better in 3-4 days
- Bloody vomit or bowel movement (remember that red Kool-Aid, sports drinks or Jell-O can cause red vomit or diarrhea)
- Coffee grounds-appearing vomit or black, tarry stools
- When instructed by your clinician

For emergencies on campus call (216) 368-3333; off campus call 911.