

# Gastroenteritis (Stomach Flu)

## What is gastroenteritis?

- Gastroenteritis, also called the stomach bug or stomach flu, is a common illness that causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps.
- Usually resolves within a few days and is not serious

## Signs and Symptoms

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Stomach cramps
- Fever
- Dehydration - increased thirst, little urine output, dry mouth, no tears when crying, sunken eyes, acting sleepy or less alert, feeling dizzy or lightheaded

## Prevention

- Proper and frequent hand washing.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Follow food safety guidelines.
- Receive recommended immunizations

## What causes gastroenteritis?

- Occurs when germs (viruses, bacteria, or parasites) infect the stomach or intestine, causing inflammation
- Viruses are the most common cause of gastroenteritis in the pediatric population (i.e., rotavirus).
- The germs that cause gastroenteritis can spread easily. An individual can easily become infected if they:
  - Touch something contaminated and then touch food or their mouth
  - Share food or drinks with someone who is sick
  - Live with someone who is infected, even if that person is not sick.

## Contact the doctor if your child:

- Doesn't drink for several hours
- Is urinating less often (more than 4-6 hours for babies and 6-8 hours for older children)
- Has signs of dehydration (as listed above)
- Has a high fever
- Has visible blood in their stool or vomit
- Is vomiting for more than 24 hours or diarrhea doesn't get better after several days

## Treatment

- There is no specific treatment, however, certain supportive care interventions can be beneficial.
- Adequate hydration is key:
  - Encourage fluids as often as possible. If your child is throwing up, start with 1-2 tsp every few minutes.
  - Oral electrolyte fluids (e.g., Pedialyte) are preferred, but don't always taste great.
    - The next best options are as follows: diluted Gatorade, diluted apple juice, plain water.
  - **\*\*Any fluid is better than none.**
  - Don't give full-strength juice, soda, or sports drinks, as these have a lot of sugar and can make diarrhea worse.
  - Babies can continue to breastfeed or take formula as long as they are not throwing up repeatedly.
  - For babies, give oral rehydration solutions (e.g., Pedialyte or Enfalyte) instead of plain water.
  - Older children can have frozen electrolyte popsicles.
- When your child stops vomiting, offer small amounts of solid foods, such as toast, crackers, rice, or mashed potatoes. A child who is not throwing up can follow a regular diet
- Avoid dairy if it appears to be making the vomiting or diarrhea worse. Avoid fatty foods, as this can worsen diarrhea.
- Tylenol/Motrin as needed. Do not give ibuprofen if your child is under 6 months of age.
- Do not give medicines for diarrhea or vomiting unless directed by your child's PCP.
- Keep your child out of school or childcare until 24 hours without fever or vomiting, and diarrhea has improved.

