

# Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis, also known as the “stomach flu”, is an infection and inflammation of your gut lining. It is often caused by a virus but can also be caused by bacteria or parasites. It can spread from eating, drinking or touching something that is contaminated.



## What to Expect

Symptom usually start within 12 to 24 hours after exposure but can be as early as 8 hours. You should begin to feel better after 2 to 4 days.

### Symptoms include:

- Vomiting and diarrhea.
- Tummy pain, fever, headache, muscle aches.
- Dehydration: dry mouth, feeling dizzy, weak or lightheaded, dark pee, peeing less often.



## When to Get Help

### Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care if you:

- You are vomiting for more than 24 hours.
- You cannot keep fluids down.
- Your pain is only in one part of your belly or is becoming more severe.
- Your vomit is black or has blood in it.
- Your stool is black or has blood or mucous in it.
- You have a high fever (more than 38.5 °C).
- You are very dehydrated: dry mouth, very dark urine or not peeing, feeling lightheaded or fainting.

### To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- Go to HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)



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### Recommended Follow-Up

- Follow up in \_\_\_ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





# How to Care for Yourself at Home

## Hydration

It is important to stay hydrated. Do this by taking small sips of clear fluids often even if you are vomiting, as your body will retain some of the fluids. Try drinking:

- Water.
- Flat ginger ale.
- Clear broth.
- Weak tea.
- Diluted clear juices (e.g., apple juice).

Your doctor may have recommended that you use a special drink to stay hydrated called an “oral rehydration solution”:

- Store-bought options may be available at your local drug stores.
- You can make one at home by mixing half a teaspoon of salt, 6 teaspoons of sugar, and one litre of clean water.

## Diet

Avoid foods or drinks that might make your symptoms worse like fatty foods, spicy foods, coffee, alcohol, or dairy.



When the vomiting has stopped and you can drink fluids easily (usually after 24 hours), you can try small amounts of bland foods for 1 to 2 days.

Try the **BRATS** diet:

- B - bananas, bread
- R - rice (including congee and porridge)
- A - apples or applesauce
- T - toast (plain)
- S - saltine crackers

When you start to feel better, you can slowly start to eat more types of food. If your symptoms worsen, go back to a milder diet.

## Prevention

Gastroenteritis is very contagious – it spreads easily from person to person. **Prevent spread by following these tips:**

- Do not share utensils, food, or water with others.

## Gastroenteritis Discharge Instructions - continued

- Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating/drinking or using the toilet.
- Clean and disinfect bathrooms and shared spaces.
- Avoid people who are at a high risk of becoming very sick such as the elderly, young children, or people with many health conditions. Stay home if possible.

## Medication

- For minor pain, use over the counter medication, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®).
- Anti-diarrheal medication (e.g., Imodium®) can make things worse so only use it if it is advised by your healthcare provider. You can find them over the counter at your pharmacy.



Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

[https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical\\_resource/patient-information-sheet/gastroenteritis/](https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/gastroenteritis/)

## Notes:

## Additional Information

- Preventing gastroenteritis: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/gastroenteritis-adults-and-older-children>
- Gastroenteritis care (video): <https://sunnybrook.ca/glossary/item.asp?g=9&c=0&i=1442&page=26008#:~:text=Gastroenteritis%20>
- Viral gastroenteritis treatment and prevention: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/norovirus>

## Tell Us What You Think!

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

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