

VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Viral Gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis means inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines. Viral gastroenteritis is an infection caused by a virus that leads to vomiting and/or diarrhea. It is often called the “stomach flu.” Several virus can cause viral gastroenteritis including: rotaviruses, enteric adenoviruses, and Noroviruses.

How is it spread?

The viruses are spread through close contact with infected persons (for example, by sharing food, water, or eating utensils) and by touching surfaces contaminated by vomit or feces of ill persons.

People may also become infected by eating or drinking foods or beverages contaminated with a virus.

How is it treated?

Treatment is to prevent severe loss of body fluids (dehydration).

- For children, an oral rehydration fluid such as Pedialyte, Ceralyte, or Oralyte can be used.
- Adults should drink clear liquids and avoid alcoholic and caffeinated beverages.
- May need special medical attention if dehydration occurs.

How can we prevent the spread of Viral Gastroenteritis?

- Frequent hand washing and hand hygiene.
- Proper food storage and preparation.
- Don't make food for others if you are ill.
- Clean contaminated surfaces with a bleach solution.
- Prompt washing of soiled clothing.

SYMPTOMS OF VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS

- Watery diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Sense of tiredness
- Abdominal cramps

Symptoms usually start 1-2 days after exposure and may last 1-10 days depending on which virus caused the illness.

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