

Gastroenteritis: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Gastroenteritis is an illness that may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. It is sometimes called "stomach flu." It can be caused by bacteria or a virus.

You will probably begin to feel better in 1 to 2 days. In the meantime, get plenty of rest and make sure you do not become dehydrated. Dehydration occurs when your body loses too much fluid.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. Choose water and other caffeine-free clear liquids until you feel better. If you have kidney, heart, or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase your fluid intake.
- Drink fluids slowly, in frequent, small amounts, because drinking too much too fast can cause vomiting.
- Begin eating mild foods, such as dry toast, yogurt, applesauce, bananas, and rice. Avoid spicy, hot, or high-fat foods, and do not drink alcohol or caffeine for a day or two. Do not drink milk or eat ice cream until you are feeling better.

How to prevent gastroenteritis

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

- Do not eat meats, dressings, salads, or other foods that have been kept at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Use a thermometer to check your refrigerator. It should be between 34°F and 40°F.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator or microwave, not on the kitchen counter.
- Keep your hands and your kitchen clean. Wash your hands, cutting boards, and countertops with hot soapy water frequently.
- Cook meat until it is well done.
- Do not eat raw eggs or uncooked sauces made with raw eggs.
- Do not take chances. If food looks or tastes spoiled, throw it out.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You vomit blood or what looks like coffee grounds.
- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You pass maroon or very bloody stools.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have severe belly pain.
- You have signs of needing more fluids. You have sunken eyes, a dry mouth, and pass only a little dark urine.
- You feel like you are going to faint.
- You have increased belly pain that does not go away in 1 to 2 days.
- You have new or increased nausea, or you are vomiting.
- You have a new or higher fever.
- Your stools are black and tarlike or have streaks of blood.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You are dizzy or lightheaded.
- You urinate less than usual, or your urine is dark yellow or brown.
- You do not feel better with each day that goes by.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **N142** in the search box to learn more about "**Gastroenteritis: Care Instructions**".

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