

### ***What is Viral Gastroenteritis (Stomach Flu)?***

Viral gastroenteritis (VYE-rull gas-tro-en-ter-EYE-tis) is an illness that is sometimes called "stomach flu". It can be caused by several different viruses, which are only found in humans. The infection is not usually serious and goes away on its own. It is not the same illness as influenza ("the flu"), which is caused by a virus that infects the lungs, throat and sinuses.

### ***How is Viral Gastroenteritis spread?***

You can get viral gastroenteritis by eating food or drinking water contaminated with the stool (bowel movement) of an infected person. You can also get viral gastroenteritis by eating shellfish or drinking water that has been contaminated with sewage.

It is also easily spread from person-to-person by touching others or handling food with unwashed hands after using the bathroom or touching items such as diapers or linens soiled by stool and then touching your mouth.

### ***What are the symptoms of Viral Gastroenteritis?***

- diarrhea
- vomiting
- nausea
- cramps
- headache
- muscle aches
- tiredness
- slight fever

Most people usually have symptoms about 1-2 days after infection. The illness usually lasts about 1-2 days but may last up to a week or more.

### ***How do I know if I have Viral Gastroenteritis?***

See your doctor. The illness is usually diagnosed by symptoms and medical exam, but your doctor may order tests to rule out bacterial infection or another condition.

### ***How is Viral Gastroenteritis treated?***

There is no medicine to cure viral gastroenteritis once you have it. There is no vaccine (shot) to prevent viral gastroenteritis. Your doctor may recommend medicine to lessen the symptoms or fluids to prevent dehydration (severe fluid loss). Drinking lots of fluids helps your body replace fluids lost by diarrhea and vomiting.

### ***Are there complications from Viral Gastroenteritis?***

For most people, no. People who become infected almost always completely recover. Viral gastroenteritis can be a serious illness for people who are unable to drink enough fluids to replace what they lose. Infants, young children, people who are unable to care for themselves, and people with weakened immune systems are at risk for dehydration.

### ***How can Viral Gastroenteritis be prevented?***

Washing hands with soap and running water is the most important way to prevent the spread of viral gastroenteritis. Always wash hands:

- After using the bathroom
- After changing diapers
- After cleaning the toilet
- After handling anything soiled with stool
- Before eating and preparing food
- Exclude people with diarrhea from fixing and serving food.
- Do not eat undercooked or raw seafood.
- Never send young children with diarrhea to a child care center or play group.