

VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS

What is Viral Gastroenteritis?

Viral gastroenteritis is a viral infection that affects the stomach and small intestines. The illness is usually brief, lasting 1 to 3 days.

What are the symptoms?

- Fatigue
- Chills
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Diarrhea
- Low-grade fever
- Muscle aches

How is it treated?

The most important thing to do is to rest the stomach and intestines. This can be done by following a clear liquid diet and then advancing your diet as tolerated. A clear liquid diet may include:

- Weak tea
- Bouillon/broth
- Miso soup
- Clear juice
- Gatorade
- Water/ice chips
- Popsicles

Avoid liquids that are acidic or caffeinated or have a lot of carbonation. Do not drink milk until symptoms have resolved.

You may advance to a bland diet when you have not vomited for several hours and are able to drink clear liquids without further upset. A bland diet may include:

- Saltines
- Toast
- Noodles
- Applesauce
- Bananas
- Mashed potatoes

Sometimes treatment will include prescription medications to prevent nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

How long does viral gastroenteritis last?

Viral gastroenteritis rarely lasts longer than 1 to 3 days. However, it may be 1 to 2 weeks before your bowel habits return completely to normal. Dehydration is a potentially serious complication of viral gastroenteritis. It can occur if your body loses too much fluid from vomiting and/or diarrhea. If you are severely dehydrated, you may need to be given IV fluids.

How is viral gastroenteritis prevented?

The single most effective way to prevent viral gastroenteritis is through frequent hand washing. It is also important to avoid contact with an infected person.



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