

What is gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of the stomach (gastro) and intestine (enteritis).

It can be caused by a microorganism such as a bacteria, virus, or parasite, or by a chemical such as a pesticide or metal.

Common symptoms include upset stomach, vomiting, fever, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and bloating. Bloody stool is also common. Symptoms may last anywhere from a few days to over a week.

If caused by chemical poisoning, symptoms often begin within an hour. When caused by an infection, symptoms begin within two hours to seven days of contact with the microorganism.

How is it transmitted?

- › Through contact with the stool of an infected person
- › Through contact with contaminated hands or objects
- › By eating food that was not handled or stored properly
- › By drinking contaminated water
- › Through contact with animals such as birds, fish, and reptiles or their aquariums, cages, or litter boxes
- › Through oral sex

Treating gastroenteritis

Stay hydrated

A person who is vomiting or has diarrhea loses water and electrolytes and should drink an electrolyte solution from a pharmacy. If you cannot buy an electrolyte solution, you can get by with the following recipe for the first 12 hours:

Rehydration beverage

- › 360 millilitres, or 12 ounces, of unsweetened, ready-to-drink orange juice
- › 600 millilitres, or 20 ounces, of water boiled for one minute, then cooled
- › 2.5 millilitres, or ½ teaspoon, of salt

It is important that you use measuring cups and measuring spoons to get these exact measurements.



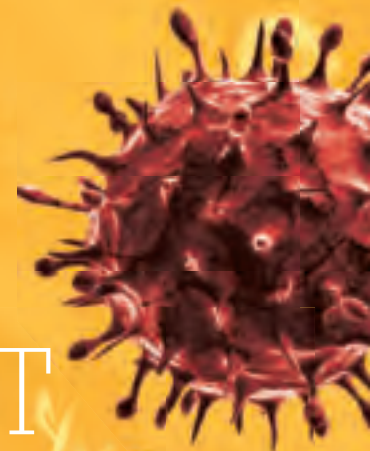
Should I call Info-Santé?

You can call Info-Santé at 8-1-1 for information about the best ways to treat gastroenteritis and avoid spreading it to those around you.

If you have any of these serious symptoms, contact Info-Santé to see if you should get medical attention:

- › Diarrhea that lasts more than three days without improving
- › Fever over 38°C or 104°F
- › Vomiting that lasts more than 24 hours
- › Bloody stool
- › Severe stomach pain
- › Thirst
- › Inability to drink or keep fluids down
- › Going several hours without urinating
- › Vomit that contains stool or bright red blood or looks dark like coffee grounds
- › Worsening condition
- › Drowsiness
- › Confusion
- › Any other concerning symptoms

GASTROENTERITIS



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

How to protect against it

Best prevention: Wash your hands frequently

When to wash your hands

- › Often, because some people may be infected without having symptoms and be contagious without knowing it
- › Before handling food or cooking utensils
- › After preparing raw meat or poultry
- › Before eating
- › After using the restroom
- › After changing a diaper or helping a child use the toilet
- › After cleaning an animal cage or aquarium or handling animal food
- › After touching garbage
- › After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- › After smoking
- › Whenever it seems appropriate

Keep sick people out of certain environments

If a person with gastroenteritis could spread the disease to others, he or she should be removed from the environment. This applies to children in daycare or school and workers who handle food or care for the vulnerable. If you are unsure, call Info-Santé at 8-1-1 to find out.

Clean household surfaces

Normal home cleaning products are usually effective. When someone in your home has gastroenteritis, regularly clean surfaces that come into frequent contact with hands and feces, such as faucets, toilet flushers, and changing tables.

If a healthcare professional has recommended disinfecting after basic cleaning, use a bleach-based solution consisting of 10 millilitres (2 teaspoons) of bleach and 90 millilitres (3 ounces) of water.

Handle food carefully and pay attention to the water you drink

The websites of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation (MAPAQ) offer helpful tips, such as:

- › Keep food that should be consumed cold between 0°C and 4°C.
- › Keep food that should be consumed warm at 60°C or higher.
- › Bacteria and their toxins multiply in food between 4°C and 60°C.
- › Thaw food in the refrigerator, not at room temperature.
- › Never allow cooked food to come into contact with utensils, dishes, or surfaces used to prepare raw food, especially meat and seafood.
- › Avoid sharing utensils or glasses without first washing them with soap.
- › Boil untreated water from streams, lakes, rivers, and springs for at least one minute before drinking it.
- › Make sure to perform regular maintenance on private water supply facilities such as shallow wells and artesian wells. If you are unsure if your water is safe or if the authorities have issued a boil-water advisory, boil your water for one minute.
- › When travelling abroad, make sure the water is potable before drinking it. Tap water should never be considered safe in the tropics, even in luxury hotels. Use sealed bottled water for drinking, washing fruits and vegetables, and brushing your teeth. Don't ask for ice cubes in your beverages.

Do you drink water from an artesian well? Check out the "L'eau de votre puits est-elle sécuritaire" leaflet on the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Chaudière-Appalaches website at:

- › agencesss12.gouv.qc.ca
- › www.agencesss12.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/documents/publications/Depliant_puits.pdf

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How to wash your hands

Rinsing your hands is not enough. To do a thorough job, wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. Follow these steps:

- 1 Remove your watch and other jewellery.
- 2 Turn on the faucet and rinse your hands and wrists.
- 3 Lather your hands with soap.
- 4 Scrub your hands and wrists. Don't forget your fingertips, nails, thumbs, and the areas between your fingers.
- 5 Rinse thoroughly with running water.
- 6 Dry your hands with a clean towel.
- 7 Turn off the faucet with a towel or paper towel.

If you don't have soap and water, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

