
Gastrointestinal Illness

(Unspecified)

What is Gastrointestinal Illness (G.I. illness)?

- A disease caused by a virus or bacteria.

How does a person get a G.I. illness?

- The virus or bacteria has to enter the mouth of another person in order to infect them. It is spread by:
 - person-to-person contact if hands are not washed thoroughly
 - drinking water or eating food contaminated with a virus or bacteria
 - contact with contaminated surfaces such as doorknobs, railings, taps and /or contact with infected stool.
- It may be spread through the air when an infected person vomits.
- Outbreaks of G.I. illness commonly occur in group living facilities such as hospitals, schools, cruise ships and where groups of people gather in close proximity.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms may include abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache and low grade fever.
- Symptoms usually develop suddenly but may occur anytime from several hours to several days after a person has become infected.
- The illness can last from a few hours to several days.

How is G.I. illness treated?

- Most people recover on their own without treatment.
- Drink plenty of fluids to replace water lost from diarrhea. If symptoms worsen, see your doctor.

How is G.I. illness prevented?

- Always wash your hands:
 - after using the toilet
 - before and after preparing or handling food
 - before eating
 - after diapering a child
 - after handling pets or animals
 - after assisting an ill person
 - after cleaning soiled areas, bedding or clothing.
- Use alcohol-based hand gel (60-90% alcohol content) frequently when hand washing is not possible.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Clean all surfaces thoroughly and often, especially taps, railings, door handles, counters.

What if my child or I have symptoms?

- Do not attend daycare, school, place of work, social gatherings or volunteer activities until symptoms have stopped.
- If symptoms are similar to Norovirus, do not attend above activities until 48 hours **after** symptoms have stopped. If you are a food handler, the time extends to 72 hours **after** symptoms have stopped, or as directed by Public Health.

For more information contact the Provincial Health Information Line at **811**
or Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**
