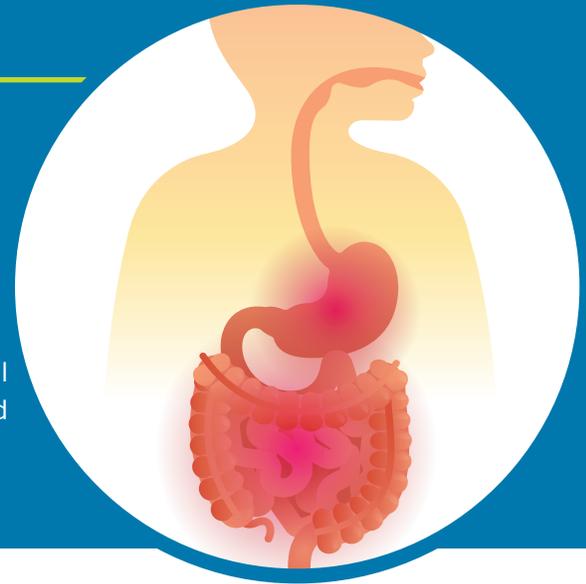


Gastroenteritis Infections

Information for shelters, drop-ins, and social housing facilities



About GASTROENTERITIS INFECTIONS

Gastroenteritis is an infection which irritates the stomach and may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever. Sometimes called “stomach flu”, it is not caused by the influenza or “flu” virus. Germs like viruses and bacteria can cause it.

Norovirus, Salmonella, and Shigella are examples of viruses or bacteria that can cause illness. They can be easily spread from person to person. Gastrointestinal outbreaks can happen year-round but are more common in the colder months.

FACTS about gastrointestinal infections



VOMITING

Illness can last for **2 DAYS OR MORE**.

People who are ill do **NOT** need to isolate.



STOMACH CRAMPING

SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:



DIARRHEA



FEVER

Some people with **MILD ILLNESS** may recover on their own. Some people become **SEVERELY ILL** and may need **TREATMENT** to recover.

HAND-WASHING, SURFACE CLEANING, PROPER FOOD HANDLING, and frequent **SHOWERING** are the best ways to prevent infection.



How these infections SPREAD

Drinking/eating **CONTAMINATED FOOD OR DRINKS**: This can happen if someone who is sick handles food or drinks without washing their hands first.

Contact with **THINGS CONTAMINATED** with the vomit or stool of a sick person - only a tiny amount can cause illness.

Swimming or bathing in **CONTAMINATED WATER**.

INFREQUENT OR IMPROPER HANDWASHING after using the toilet.

Sharing objects like **CIGARETTES, STRAWS, UTENSILS, OR PIPES** with others.

Placing hands in your mouth **AFTER TOUCHING A CONTAMINATED SURFACE**.

SEX ACTIVITIES where your mouth is on someone's bum or you put your mouth on something that has been in someone's bum (e.g. penis, sex toy, fingers) can pass viruses and bacteria between partners.

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What to do if YOU ARE SICK

See a health-care provider if you have **bloody diarrhea**, or **severe diarrhea**.



Drink plenty of clear fluids such as water or broth.



A health-care provider may recommend testing to find out if you need antibiotic treatment. Always take your medications as prescribed and complete the full course of your prescription.



If you work or volunteer in a food setting, do not work until you are symptom-free for at **least 48 hours**.



Wash your hands well and often with soap and warm water, especially after using the washroom, changing diapers, and before preparing food and drinks.



Wash soiled laundry and bedding with regular detergent and hot water, followed by machine drying. Contain and avoid shaking out soiled laundry.

How to keep spaces safe: ROUTINE CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Remember: **CLEAN FIRST, THEN DISINFECT**



For regular cleaning, wash hard surfaces with an all-purpose cleaner and hot water. Then disinfect by using a solution of 4 teaspoons of household bleach mixed with 1 litre of water. Then air dry.

Make sure washrooms are clean, available and have toilet paper, soap, paper towels, and sinks with hot and cold running water.



Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces, common spaces, and washrooms at least twice a day.



Remind everyone to wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



If washrooms must be shared, provide wipes to people who are sick and encourage them to wipe down the washroom after use.



Remember: CLEAN FIRST, THEN DISINFECT

- Wear disposable gloves (or household rubber gloves that can be cleaned and sanitized).
- For added protection, use goggles, protective clothing, and a mask.



SPILL CLEANUP

Have spill kits available for staff, volunteers, and residents to use for cleaning up vomit or stool. Spill kits should include:

- Garbage bags and tape for closing
- Disposable gloves
- Paper towels
- Detergent
- Bleach or disinfectant (1 cup bleach + 10 cups water)
- Bucket
- Mop, cloths, brushes



NOTE: Make sure to clean and disinfect mops, cloths, and brushes after being used to clean body fluid spills

Do you have questions about illness in your facility? Contact the **VCH CDC** at **604-675-3900** and ask to speak to a **Communicable Disease Environmental Health Officer (CD EHO)** for guidance.



ADAPTED FROM:

BC Health Link – Norovirus: healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/norovirus

Sneezes & Diseases: sneezesdiseases.com

BC Health Link – Gastroenteritis in Adults and Older Children: healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/gastroenteritis-adults-and-older-children

BCCDC – Norovirus/Norwalk-like virus: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/norovirus-norwalk-like-virus>