

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis is caused by irritation of the stomach and/or intestines. Various lab tests may be ordered to help determine the actual cause, depending on your history and exam which may include:

- Infection: bacterial, viral parasitic
- Food and drug intolerance
- Stress, anxiety, depression
- Pregnancy
- Heat exhaustion
- Appendicitis
- Toxic chemicals
- Travelers diarrhea

Gastroenteritis includes a wide spectrum of symptoms. For mild symptoms, such as loss of appetite, loose stools, increased gas and/or mild cramping, self treatment through diet, non-prescription drugs and rest is usually all that is required.

Recommended Diet

CLEAR LIQUIDS (the first 12-24 hours)

- NO milk products
- Gatorade
- 7-up, ginger ale, other clear sodas
- Water
- Jell-O (clear)
- Tea, herb tea
- Fruit juices - diluted in moderation
- Broth (chicken or beef)

BLAND (next 1-3 days)

- NO milk products, whole grains, or uncooked vegetables.
- Bananas, pears, apple sauce
- Toast (no butter), bread, soda crackers
- Rice
- Boiled or baked potatoes, (no butter or gravy)
- Cream of wheat or rice cereal
- Soups (no cream or spicy soups)
- Small amounts of boiled chicken or lean beef
- Lots of clear liquids

Take frequent small sips to start, then gradually increase the amount until you can get 3 1/2 to 4 quarts down in 24 hours. Vary types of fluids, not just water. Alcoholic and caffeine beverages are not tolerated with these symptoms.

Treatment

- Tylenol (not aspirin) for fever and pain
- Rest: extra sleep
- Limit exposure to others
- See doctor if not better in 2-3 days.

For more severe symptoms like vomiting for more than 2 days, diarrhea more than 6-8 times per day, blood in stools, weakness, painful cramping and/or fever over 101 should be evaluated by a medical professional. Treatment will vary depending upon the diagnosis. It is important to follow medical instructions carefully and to let the physician know if you are not getting better within 1-2 days.

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