

STOMACH VIRUSES

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What You Should Know

- Symptoms are vomiting and diarrhea. It is caused by viruses. (Norovirus and rotavirus are common culprits.) It is viral gastroenteritis and is not related to influenza (the real flu). *The flu shot does not protect against stomach viruses.*
- Sometimes referred to as “stomach flu”, “norovirus”, “stomach bug”, “24 hour bug”, “stomach virus”, and “intestinal virus”. It is NOT “the flu”.
- Millions of viruses are in poop, vomit, and possibly nasal secretions of a sick person.
- Illness is spread when a few of these viruses get into someone else’s mouth.
- It usually takes 24-72 hours to get sick after you have swallowed the virus but can take a full week.
- A person is contagious (still producing viruses) for at least 3 days *AFTER* symptoms have stopped.
- Stay away from other people as much as possible while you are contagious and don’t prepare food for anyone else if possible.
- If you or your child is sick with vomiting or diarrhea, do not prepare food or snacks for other people. (It is not a good time to bring a snack for the class or bake cookies for a sports team.) If you work in food service, *DO NOT* go to work.
- Children should stay home from school or daycare for 48 hours after the last bout of vomiting. 48 hours is the minimum time it takes to make sure symptoms are over. (There can be a relapse of vomiting after 24 hours and the diarrhea sometimes doesn’t start for 24-48 hours after the vomiting).
- The viruses can live for weeks on household surfaces. Clean with chlorine bleach (a 5%-10% solution of household bleach in water), Lysol® disinfectant spray brand III, or Clorox Hydrogen Peroxide Wipes (available on amazon) or Clorox Hydrogen Peroxide Spray (great for carpet). The Regular Clorox® wipes and Lysol® wipes from the grocery *DO NOT* claim to kill these viruses.
- Since the viruses live so long on household surfaces, don’t have company to your house until all have been well for 2 weeks. If you do have company, give them a warning. Don’t go to someone else’s house who has been sick with a stomach bug for 2 weeks unless you have a few pounds that you’d like to lose.
- School nurses should not send children who “don’t feel good” back to class. Children with stomach bugs frequently don’t have a fever and vomiting in the middle of class will put the other students at high risk.
- Never visit someone at a nursing home or hospital until you have been well for 2 weeks after a stomach bug.
- Wash your hands frequently. Teachers should insist that all children wash their hands before lunch and snack. Most elementary school teachers do not do this.

For more information, visit www.stopthestomachflu.com