STOMACH FLU (Viral Gastroenteritis)

Stomach flu is also called gastroenteritis, an infection of the stomach and intestines, and it is different from influenza. Viruses and bacteria that cause gastroenteritis are contracted orally through contact with the secretions of infected people, from sharing food or drinks, or from consuming contaminated food. The most common cause is the rotavirus. Adenovirus or Norovirus may also be suspect. Norovirus is very contagious, often finding its mark in hospitals, cruise ships, care homes – it can be spread through touching surfaces that are contamminated. It is also thought that stress may be a component to bring on stomach flu.

Common symptoms include upset stomach, diarrhea, nausea, headache, body aches, stomach cramping, mild fever or chills, sweating or clammy skin, loss of appetite, fatigue and vomiting. Symptoms usually appear within 48 hours after exposure. The symptoms only last between one and three days, but it can take up to two weeks for bowel function to return to normal. Lately there are a few new strains that are taking between one and three weeks to heal.

Symptoms are treated by drinking plenty of clear fluids, eating bland foods when nausea subsides, avoiding foods that contain dairy or wheat, and getting plenty of rest. To avoid contracting gastroenteritis, it is recommended to not share food or drinks, wash hands frequently with soap, cook food thoroughly, refrigerate leftovers within two hours, and wash countertops, cutting boards and utensils after preparing food to prevent cross-contamination.

The Mayo Clinic advises that if vomiting persists for more than two days, vomit or stool contains blood, a fever surpasses 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40c) or there are signs of dehydration, medical attention should be sought. Signs of dehydration include dry mouth, thirst, infrequent urination, urine that is deep yellow, weakness, dizziness and feeling lightheaded.

The biggest danger from gastroenteritis is dehydration. Drink lots of bland liquids such as water.

Foods to Help

Often you will not be able to tolerate any food other than small sips of water for the first day or two, then you can try some of the following.

Ginger

Ginger is a natural anti-inflammatory, antiviral and gives relief from nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and bloating. It also helps reduce frequency of loose stools. Boil 1 tsp freshly chopped ginger in 1 ½ cups hot water. Cover and allow it to steep 10 minutes, strain and sip slowly. Drink it a few times a day until feeling better. You can also chew a small piece of fresh ginger root several times a day to soothe the stomach. If you have high blood pressure, avoid ginger remedies.

Peppermint

Peppermint helps dispel gas and bloating, and gives relief from stomach and intestinal cramping. Pour one cup of boiling water over a teaspoon of dried peppermint leaves. Steep 10 minutes, strain and cool. Drink 4-5 times daily between meals for 2-3 days. You can also take 1-2 enteric coated peppermint capsules 2-3 times a day to get relief from the symptoms.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon is a good antibacterial, antiviral agent and helps get rid of chills, aches and pains to make you feel more comfortable. Mix 2 tsp cinnamon powder in 1 ½ cups boiling water. Let is brew 5 minutes, then strain with a cheese cloth or fine strainer. Add one teaspoon honey. Drink the soothing tea 3-4 times a day for 2 days.

Beef or Chicken Broth

A good place to start if the pain has finished and you need to start reintroducing food back into the stomach. You can use bone broth that you buy or make. Everyone has heard of chicken soup is good

for the recovery after sickness, but start with just the broth of the soup and if it agrees, then several hours later you can try to eat some of the soup.

Chamomile

Chamomile is a good antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory. Be it diarrhea, abdominal cramping, bloating, nausea or gas, chamomile will help give you relief.

1. Add two to three teaspoons of dried chamomile flowers to a cup of hot water.
2. Cover and let it steep for 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Strain, and then add some lemon juice and honey as per your taste.
4. Drink this tea three or four times a day for two to three days.

Apple Cider Vinegar

Another effective home treatment for stomach flu is apple cider vinegar. It acts as an effective agent against the viruses that cause stomach flu. It is also a rich source of pectin, which helps soothe an irritated stomach. Moreover, it helps treat stomach ache, nausea, vomiting and gas.

- Add one teaspoon of apple cider vinegar to a glass of water or any fruit juice. Drink it before meals until you get complete relief from stomach flu symptoms.
- Alternatively, add one tablespoon each of apple cider vinegar and honey to one cup of warm water. Drink this every few hours until you start feeling better.

Lemon

Because of its acidic effect, lemon is considered an excellent remedy for stomach flu. It can kill the pathogens that cause stomach flu. Plus, the vitamin C in lemon as well as the antimicrobial properties boost the immune system to fight off the virus.

1. Mix one to two teaspoons of fresh lemon juice in a glass of water.
2. Drink it 30 minutes before meals.
3. Follow this remedy until you recover completely.

Probiotic Yogurt

Building up the good bacteria in your intestines by eating probiotic yogurt is a good way to fight off the various symptoms of stomach flu. Probiotic yogurt has live cultures that aid digestion and also help keep your immune system strong.

- Simply eat two to three cups of probiotic yogurt daily until you get relief. You can also add some banana slices to your yogurt to enhance the taste as well as effectiveness.
- You can also make a tasty smoothie with yogurt, banana, apple and honey. Drink it two or three times a day for faster recovery.

Garlic

Another natural stomach flu remedy is garlic, due to its antibacterial and antimicrobial properties. Also, garlic will soothe the lining of stomach, bringing you relief from cramping, indigestion, bloating and gas.

1. Mix one teaspoon of freshly chopped garlic with some honey.
2. Eat it immediately after preparing it.
3. Repeat two or three times a day for two days to speed up recovery.

Rice Water

If you are suffering from diarrhea and a stomach ache due to the stomach flu, the best remedy is rice water. Rice water is a bland food that acts like a demulcent to help reduce inflammation of the stomach lining and alleviate pain.

1. In an uncovered pan, boil one-half cup of white rice in six cups of water until the rice is tender.
2. Strain and allow the water to cool.
3. Add one-half teaspoon each of honey and cinnamon powder.
4. Sip the warm rice water slowly every hour.
5. Follow this remedy for a week.

Bananas

Both ripe and raw bananas have proven to be very helpful in the treatment of stomach flu. Bananas are easy to digest and contain a good amount of potassium and magnesium. These minerals are two of the

electrolytes that the body, including the stomach, needs to function properly.

- **If you have diarrhea, mash one ripe banana and mix in one teaspoon of tamarind pulp and a pinch of salt. Eat this twice daily until you feel better.**
- **Eat one or two ripe bananas during the day for a week to restore your digestive health.**
- **You can also try raw banana soup as a bland food to help your body recover quickly.**

Most of the symptoms of stomach flu will subside within 48 hours. If you are still not feeling well after a couple of days, see your doctor immediately to rule out a more serious condition.

Applesauce

While fresh apples can cause diarrhea in some, applesauce has quite the opposite effect. Apples have pectin – a natural, soluble fiber. This fiber can help retain water and add bulk to stools, which slows diarrhea.

Dry Toast or Crackers

These have long been recommended for nausea, especially in pregnant woman. They absorb the acid and other stomach liquids to calm it and prepare it for herbal teas and healing foods.

Turmeric

Do not use in large amounts for stomach distress, but ¼ teaspoon added to soup or rice can provide an antibacterial boost.

Blueberries

In the dried form, blueberries have been effectively used to treat diarrhea in children. They are high in fiber and antioxidants and are a natural bacteria inhibitor. They will help retain water that bulks up stools. Blueberries also contain a substance thought to kill E coli.

Dangerous results of Stomach Flu

The most dangerous is dehydration because you loose the electrolytes due to diarrhea, vomiting, and lack of desire to take in liquids or foods.
Signs of dehydration are:

- **Not urinating**
- **Dry mouth**
- **Crying without tears**
- **Fever over 102 F**
- **Lack of energy**
- **Crankiness**
- **Soft spot on the top of the baby's head is sunken.**
- **Blood or pus in stool, or dark tarry stool**

How long does Stomach Flu Virus survive?

The virus can easily survive over a week on surfaces such as kitchen counters. Once everyone has finished the stomach flu, clean clothes, bedding, bathroom and kitchen surfaces, and everything that has come into contact with the patients.

Prevention

Wash hands often with warm soap and water, esp. when you use the bathroom, change diapers, and before and after you handle food.
Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating them. Cook meat all the way through to prevent gastroenteritis caused by bacteria.

Other

If you do get the stomach flu, you should stay home and stay hydrated. This is standard advice given over the years that has been important.

Avoid sugar and unsweetened foods such as grapefruit, orange. Take turmeric or ginger to help with the nausea. If you are not vomiting, eat small quantities of banana, applesauce, potato, bread.

Peppermint Oil applied to the tummy gives fast relief from vomiting.

Homeopathic remedies such as Arsenicum album and Nux vomica relieve some of the nasty symptoms.
Arsenicum 30c helps with diarrhea, chills, abdominal cramps and nausea.
Eupatorium 6C helps fever and muscle and body aches.
Podophyllum 30C can be taken for painful diarrhea in the morning.
Colocynthis 6C for cramps that are improved when bending over; 5 pellets three times a day.
Ipecac 6C for nausea and vomiting with hypersalivation and painful heaving. Nausea is not relieved by vomiting; 5 pellets when needed or 3 times a day.
Nux Vomica for Nausea and vomiting 6C; 5 pellets as needed or three times a day.

<u>Here is some information to help select the best homeopathic remedies to help:</u>

Arsenicum album:
- **Nausea with or without vomiting**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Abdominal pain**
- **Exhausted by illness**
- **Restless, changing position**
- **Anxious about illness and being alone**
- **Fears illness could be fatal**
- **Very thirsty**
- **May be fever**
- **Often chilly and craves being under blankets**
- **Worse at night**
- **Drinking even a little causes vomiting**
- **Cramping in abdomen**
- **External warmth is soothing**
- **Burning in rectum from diarrhea**
- **Good for food poisoning**

Nux vomica
- **Use when illness brought on by stress or over-indulgence**
- **Heartburn**
- **Nausea**
- **Dry retching**
- **Headache**
- **Irritability**
- **Worse in morning**
- **Bloating**
- **Gassiness**
- **Desires vomiting for relief**
- **Urge for bowel movement with little excretion**

Sulphur
- **Complete loss of, or excessive, appetite**
- **Food tastes too salty**
- **Drinks much, eats little**
- **Desire for sweets**
- **Weak and faint about 11 AM**
- **Water fills patient**
- **Abdomen sensitive to pressure**
- **Internal feeling of rawness or soreness**
- **Abdominal movements as of something alive**
- **Morning diarrhea drives patient out of bed**

Veratrum album

- **Vomiting and diarrhea happen simultaneously. You will be sitting on the toilet with profuse diarrhea and vomiting at the same time. When you need Veratrum album you will also feel very very cold, have cold sweat and not be able to keep fluids down. Since this can be a dangerous situation, requiring intravenous fluids, be sure to use your best common sense in seeking medical care.**
- **Watery stools with greenish color**
- **Cramps in abdomen relieved by diarrhea**
- **Motion aggravates**
- **Chilly**
- **Very weak**
- **Very thirsty for cold water**

Chamomilla:

- **Along with the vomiting will be diarrhea that looks greenish. You may feel very irritable and contrary.**
- **Violent and voluminous diarrhea with vomiting, may be simultaneously**

Aloe

- **Aversion to meat**
- **Flatulence after eating**
- **Nausea with headache**
- **Pain around navel, worse with pressure**
- **Abdomen is full and heavy, hot and bloated**
- **Weak feeling as if diarrhea will come on**
- **Stool passes without effort**
- **Constipation pressure in lower abdomen**

China

- **Vomiting of undigested food**
- **Slow digestion**
- **Hungry and longing for food which stays undigested**
- **Flatulence**
- **Belching of bitter fluid with no relief**
- **Worse eating fruit**
- **Internal coldness of stomach and abdomen**

Phosphorus

- **Much vomiting**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Restlessness**
- **Thirsty for cold drinks**
- **Better to use Arsenicum first unless vomiting triggered by smallest amount of liquid**
- **Warm water immediately aggravates**
- **Weakness in abdomen**
- **Feels hungry**
- **Involuntary stools**

Pulsatilla

- **Symptoms from poor diet or excess of rich foods**
- **Look also for general symptoms of remedy**
- **Symptoms not too severe**
- **Heartburn**
- **Heaviness after eating**
- **Coated tongue**
- **Cold drinks relieve**

Ipecac

- **Extreme nausea possibly with no diarrhea**
- **After vomiting, still no relief**
- **Not that ill, but maybe a fever and weakness**

- **May be caused by excessive eating**
- **Vomiting can be almost nonstop**
- **Pains in abdomen**
- **Lots of gas**
- **Green stool**

Bryonia

- **Digestive symptoms are aggravated by motion**
- **Small amounts of liquid may cause vomiting**
- **Pressure on abdomen helps**
- **Diarrhea worse after waking**
- **Desires to be still**

Podophyllum – this remedy is not commonly found in remedy kits and is of immeasurable value during a bout of severe diarrhea. It would be prudent to purchase it separately to keep in your stock.

- **Common for diarrhea**
- **Frequent and voluminous diarrhea**
- **Completely liquid stools**
- **Sometimes with headache**
- **Vomiting seldom accompanies the diarrhea**

Try Acupressure for Nausea:

Find the point on your wrist, it will be three finger widths below the bottomm of your palm Press and rub between your two tendons for 2-3 minutes.